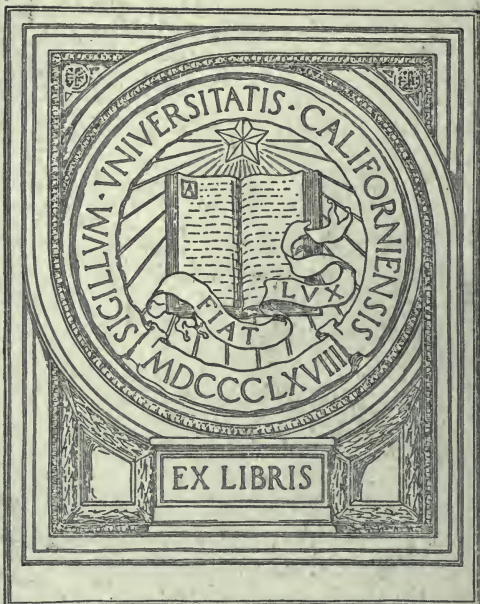


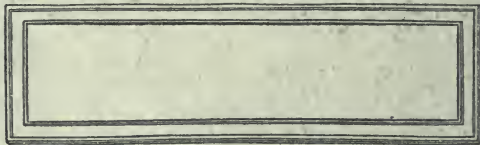
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# ITALIAN BYWAYS.

BY

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS,

AUTHOR OF

"STUDIES OF GREEK POETS," "RENAISSANCE IN ITALY," "SKETCHES IN ITALY  
AND GREECE," ETC.

LONDON:

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE.

1883.

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*These Sketches are in part reprinted from the "Cornhill Magazine," "Fraser's Magazine," and the "Fortnightly Review."*

DAVOS PLATZ, January 1883.

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TO  
CHRISTIAN BUOL AND CHRISTIAN PALMY  
MY FRIENDS AND FELLOW-TRAVELLERS  
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

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# ITALIAN BYWAYS.



## *AUTUMN WANDERINGS.*

### I.—ITALIAM PETIMUS.

*ITALIAM PETIMUS!* We left our upland home before day-break on a clear October morning. There had been a hard frost, spangling the meadows with rime-crystals, which twinkled where the sun's rays touched them. Men and women were mowing the frozen grass with thin short Alpine scythes; and as the swathes fell, they gave a crisp, an almost tinkling sound. Down into the gorge, surnamed of Avalanche, our horses plunged; and there we lost the sunshine till we reached the Bear's Walk, opening upon the vales of Albula, and Julier, and Schyn. But up above, shone morning light upon fresh snow, and steep torrent-cloven slopes reddening with a hundred fading plants; now and then it caught the grey-green icicles that hung from cliffs where summer streams had dripped. There is no colour lovelier than the blue of an autumn sky in the high Alps, defining ridges powdered with light snow, and melting imperceptibly downward into the warm yellow of the larches and the crimson of the bilberry. Wiesen was radiantly beautiful: those aerial ranges of the hills that separate Albula from Julier soared crystal-clear above their forests; and for a foreground, on the green

fields starred with lilac crocuses, careered a group of children on their sledges. Then came the row of giant peaks—Pitz d'Aela, Tinzenhorn, and Michelhorn, above the deep ravine of Albula—all seen across wide undulating golden swards, close-shaven and awaiting winter. Carnations hung from cottage windows in full bloom, casting sharp angular black shadows on white walls.

*Italiam petimus!* We have climbed the valley of the Julier, following its green, transparent torrent. A night has come and gone at Mühlen. The stream still leads us up, diminishing in volume as we rise, up through the fleecy mists that roll asunder for the sun, disclosing far-off snowy ridges and blocks of granite mountains. The lifeless, soundless waste of rock, where only thin winds whistle out of silence and fade suddenly into still air, is passed. Then comes the descent, with its forests of larch and cembra, golden and dark green upon a ground of grey, and in front the serried shafts of the Bernina, and here and there a glimpse of emerald lake at turnings of the road. Autumn is the season for this landscape. Through the fading of innumerable leaflets, the yellowing of larches, and something vaporous in the low sun, it gains a colour not unlike that of the lands we seek. By the side of the lake at Silvaplana the light was strong and warm, but mellow. Pearly clouds hung over the Maloja, and floating overhead cast shadows on the opaque water, which may literally be compared to chrysoprase. The breadth of golden, brown, and russet tints upon the valley at this moment adds softness to its lines of level strength. Devotees of the Engadine contend that it possesses an austere charm beyond the common beauty of Swiss landscape; but this charm is only perfected in autumn. The fresh snow on the heights that guard it helps. And then there are the forests of dark pines upon those many knolls and undulating mountain-flanks beside

the lakes. Sitting and dreaming there in noonday sun, I kept repeating to myself *Italiam petimus!*

A hurricane blew upward from the pass as we left Silvaplana, ruffling the lake with gusts of the Italian wind. By Silz Maria we came in sight of a dozen Italian workmen, arm linked in arm in two rows, tramping in rhythmic stride, and singing as they went. Two of them were such nobly-built young men, that for a moment the beauty of the landscape faded from my sight, and I was saddened. They moved to their singing, like some of Mason's or Frederick Walker's figures, with the free grace of living statues, and laughed as we drove by. And yet, with all their beauty, industry, sobriety, intelligence, these Italians of the northern valleys serve the sterner people of the Grisons like negroes, doing their roughest work at scanty wages.

So we came to the vast Alpine wall, and stood on a bare granite slab, and looked over into Italy, as men might lean from the battlements of a fortress. Behind lies the Alpine valley, grim, declining slowly northward, with wind-lashed lakes and glaciers sprawling from storm-broken pyramids of gneiss. Below spread the unfathomable depths that lead to Lombardy, flooded with sunlight, filled with swirling vapour, but never wholly hidden from our sight. For the blast kept shifting the cloud-masses, and the sun streamed through in spears and bands of sheeny rays. Over the parapet our horses dropped, down through sable spruce and amber larch, down between tangles of rowan and autumnal underwood. Ever as we sank, the mountains rose—those sharp embattled precipices, toppling spires, impendent chasms blurred with mist, that make the entrance into Italy sublime. Nowhere do the Alps exhibit their full stature, their commanding puissance, with such majesty as in the gates of Italy; and of all those gates I think there is none to compare with Maloja, none certainly to rival it in abruptness of initia-

tion into the Italian secret. Below Vico Soprano we pass already into the violets and blues of Titian's landscape. Then come the purple boulders among chestnut trees; then the double dolomite-like peak of Pitz Badin and Promontogno.

It is sad that words can do even less than painting could to bring this window-scene at Promontogno before another eye. The casement just frames it. In the foreground are meadow slopes, thinly, capriciously planted with chestnut trees and walnuts, each standing with its shadow cast upon the sward. A little farther falls the torrent, foaming down between black jaws of rain-stained granite, with the wooden buildings of a rustic mill set on a ledge of rock. Suddenly above this landscape soars the valley, clothing its steep sides on either hand with pines; and there are emerald isles of pasture on the wooded flanks; and then cliffs, where the red-stemmed larches glow; and at the summit, shooting into ether with a swathe of mist around their basement, soar the double peaks, the one a pyramid, the other a bold broken crystal not unlike the Finsteraarhorn seen from Furka. These are connected by a snowy saddle, and snow is lying on their inaccessible crags in powdery drifts. Sunlight pours between them into the ravine. The green and golden forests now join from either side, and now recede, according as the sinuous valley brings their lines together or disparts them. There is a sound of cow-bells on the meadows; and the roar of the stream is dulled or quickened as the gusts of this October wind sweep by or slacken.

*Italiam petimus!*

*Tangimus Italiam!* Chiavenna is a worthy key to this great gate Italian. We walked at night in the open galleries of the cathedral-cloister—white, smoothly curving, well-proportioned loggie, enclosing a green space, whence soars the campanile to the stars. The moon had sunk, but her

light still silvered the mountains that stand at watch round Chiavenna; and the castle rock was flat and black against that dreamy background. Jupiter, who walked so lately for us on the long ridge of the Jacobshorn above our pines, had now an ample space of sky over Lombardy to light his lamp in. Why is it, we asked each other, as we smoked our pipes and strolled, my friend and I;—why is it that Italian beauty does not leave the spirit so untroubled as an Alpine scene? Why do we here desire the flower of some emergent feeling to grow from the air, or from the soil, or from humanity to greet us? This sense of want evoked by Southern beauty is perhaps the antique mythopœic yearning. But in our perplexed life it takes another form, and seems the longing for emotion, ever fleeting, ever new, unrealised, unreal, insatiable.

## II.—OVER THE APENNINES.

At Parma we slept in the Albergo della Croce Bianca, which is more a bric-à-brac shop than an inn; and slept but badly, for the good folk of Parma twanged guitars and exercised their hoarse male voices all night in the street below. We were glad when Christian called us, at 5 A.M., for an early start across the Apennines. This was the day of a right Roman journey. In thirteen and a half hours, leaving Parma at 6, and arriving in Sarzana at 7.30, we flung ourselves across the spine of Italy, from the plains of Eridanus to the seashore of Etruscan Luna. I had secured a carriage and extra post-horses the night before; therefore we found no obstacles upon the road, but eager drivers, quick relays, obsequious postmasters, change, speed, perpetual movement. The road itself is a noble one, and nobly entertained in all things but accommodation for travellers. At Berceto, near the summit of the pass, we stopped just half an hour, to



lunch off a mouldy hen and six eggs; but that was all the halt we made.

As we drove out of Parma, striking across the plain to the *ghiara* of the Taro, the sun rose over the austere autumnal landscape, with its withered vines and crimson haws. Christian, the mountaineer, who at home had never seen the sun rise from a flat horizon, stooped from the box to call attention to this daily recurring miracle, which on the plain of Lombardy is no less wonderful than on a rolling sea. From the village of Fornovo, where the Italian League was camped awaiting Charles VIII. upon that memorable July morn in 1495, the road strikes suddenly aside, gains a spur of the descending Apennines, and keeps this vantage till the pass of La Cisa is reached. Many windings are occasioned by thus adhering to arêtes, but the total result is a gradual ascent with free prospect over plain and mountain. The Apennines, built up upon a smaller scale than the Alps, perplexed in detail and entangled with cross sections and convergent systems, lend themselves to this plan of carrying highroads along their ridges instead of following the valley.

What is beautiful in the landscape of that northern watershed is the subtlety, delicacy, variety, and intricacy of the mountain outlines. There is drawing wherever the eye falls. Each section of the vast expanse is a picture of tossed crests and complicated undulations. And over the whole sea of stationary billows, light is shed like an ethereal raiment, with spare colour—blue and grey, and parsimonious green—in the near foreground. The detail is somewhat dry and monotonous; for these so finely moulded hills are made up of washed earth, the immemorial wrecks of earlier mountain ranges. Brown villages, not unlike those of Midland England, low houses built of stone and tiled with stone, and square-towered churches, occur at rare intervals in cultivated hollows, where there are fields and fruit trees. Water is

nowhere visible except in the wasteful river-beds. As we rise, we break into a wilder country, forested with oak, where oxen and goats are browsing. The turf is starred with lilac gentian and crocus bells, but sparsely. Then comes the highest village, Berceto, with keen Alpine air. After that, broad rolling downs of yellowing grass and russet beech-scrub lead onward to the pass La Cisa. The sense of breadth in composition is continually satisfied through this ascent by the fine-drawn lines, faint tints, and immense air-spaces of Italian landscape. Each little piece reminds one of England; but the geographical scale is enormously more grandiose, and the effect of majesty proportionately greater.

From La Cisa the road descends suddenly; for the southern escarpment of the Apennine, as of the Alpine, barrier is pitched at a far steeper angle than the northern. Yet there is no view of the sea. That is excluded by the lower hills which hem the Magra. The upper valley is beautiful, with verdant lawns and purple hillsides breaking down into thick chestnut woods, through which we wound at a rapid pace for nearly an hour. The leaves were still green, mellowing to golden; but the fruit was ripe and heavy, ready at all points to fall. In the still October air the husks above our heads would loosen, and the brown nuts rustle through the foliage, and with a dull short thud, like drops of thunder-rain, break down upon the sod. At the foot of this rich forest, wedged in between huge buttresses, we found Pontremoli, and changed our horses here for the last time. It was Sunday, and the little town was alive with country-folk; tall stalwart fellows wearing peacock's feathers in their black slouched hats, and nut-brown maids.

From this point the valley of the Magra is exceeding rich with fruit trees, vines, and olives. The tendrils of the vine are yellow now, and in some places hued like generous wine; through their thick leaves the sun shot crimson. In one cool

garden, as the day grew dusk, I noticed quince trees laden with pale fruit entangled with pomegranates—green spheres and ruddy amid burnished leaves. By the roadside too were many berries of bright hues; the glowing red of haws and hips, the amber of the pyracanthus, the rose tints of the spindle-wood. These make autumn even lovelier than spring. And then there was a wood of chestnuts carpeted with pale pink ling, a place to dream of in the twilight. But the main motive of this landscape was the indescribable Carrara range, an island of pure form and shooting peaks, solid marble, crystalline in shape and texture, faintly blue against the blue sky, from which they were but scarce divided. These mountains close the valley to south-east, and seem as though they belonged to another and more celestial region.

Soon the sunlight was gone, and moonrise came to close the day, as we rolled onward to Sarzana, through arundo donax and vine-girdled olive trees and villages, where contadini lounged upon the bridges. There was a stream of sound in our ears, and in my brain a rhythmic dance of beauties caught through the long-drawn glorious golden autumn-day.

### III.—FOSDINOVO.

*about 20 m E of Spezia*

The hamlet and the castle of Fosdinovo stand upon a mountain-spur above Sarzana, commanding the valley of the Magra and the plains of Luni. This is an ancient fief of the Malaspina House, and is still in the possession of the Marquis of that name.

The road to Fosdinovo strikes across the level through an avenue of plane trees, shedding their discoloured leaves. It then takes to the open fields, bordered with tall reeds waving from the foss on either hand, where grapes are hanging to the vines. The country-folk allow their vines to climb into the olives, and these golden festoons are a great ornament to the



grey branches. The berries on the trees are still quite green, and it is a good olive season. Leaving the main road, we pass a villa of the Malaspini, shrouded in immense thickets of sweet bay and ilex, forming a grove for the Nymphs or Pan. Here may you see just such clean stems and lucid foliage as Gian Bellini painted, inch by inch, in his Peter Martyr picture. The place is neglected now; the semicircular seats of white Carrara marble are stained with green mosses, the altars chipped, the fountains choked with bay leaves; and the rose trees, escaped from what were once trim garden alleys, have gone wandering a-riot into country hedges. There is no demarcation between the great man's villa and the neighbouring farms. From this point the path rises, and the barren hillside is a-bloom with late-flowering myrtles. Why did the Greeks consecrate these myrtle-rods to Death as well as Love? Electra complained that her father's tomb had not received the honour of the myrtle branch; and the Athenians wreathed their swords with myrtle in memory of Harmodius. Thinking of these matters, I cannot but remember lines of Greek, which have themselves the rectitude and elasticity of myrtle wands:

καὶ προσπεσὼν ἔκλαυσ' ἐρημίας τυχῶν  
 σπονδὰς τε λύσας ἀσκὸν δὲ φέρω ξένους  
 ἔσπεισα τύμβῳ δ' ἀμφέθηκα μυρσίνας.

As we approach Fosdinovo, the hills above us gain sublimity; the prospect over plain and sea—the fields where Luna was, the widening bay of Spezzia—grows ever grander. The castle is a ruin, still capable of partial habitation, and now undergoing repair—the state in which a ruin looks most sordid and forlorn. How strange it is, too, that, to enforce this sense of desolation, sad dishevelled weeds cling ever to such antique masonry! Here are the henbane, the sow-thistle, the wild cucumber. At Avignon, at Orvieto, at Dolce Acqua, at Les Baux, we never missed them. And they have

the dusty courtyards, the massive portals, where portcullises still threaten, of Fosdinovo to themselves. Over the gate, and here and there on corbels, are carved the arms of Malaspina—a barren thorn-tree, gnarled with the geometrical precision of heraldic irony.

Leaning from the narrow windows of this castle, with the spacious view to westward, I thought of Dante. For Dante in this castle was the guest of Moroello Malaspina, what time he was yet finishing the “Inferno.” There is a little old neglected garden, full to south, enclosed upon a rampart which commands the Borgo, where we found frail canker-roses and yellow amaryllis. Here, perhaps, he may have sat with ladies—for this was the Marchesa’s pleasaunce; or may have watched through a short summer’s night, until he saw that *tremolar della marina*, portending dawn, which afterwards he painted in the “Purgatory.”

From Fosdinovo one can trace the Magra work its way out seaward, not into the plain where once the *candentia mœnia Lunæ* flashed sunrise from their battlements, but close beside the little hills which back the southern arm of the Spezzian gulf. At the extreme end of that promontory, called Del Corvo, stood the Benedictine convent of S. Croce; and it was here in 1309, if we may trust to tradition, that Dante, before his projected journey into France, appeared and left the first part of his poem with the Prior. Fra Ilario, such was the good father’s name, received commission to transmit the “Inferno” to Uguccone della Faggiuola; and he subsequently recorded the fact of Dante’s visit in a letter which, though its genuineness has been called in question, is far too interesting to be left without allusion. The writer says that on occasion of a journey into lands beyond the Riviera, Dante visited this convent, appearing silent and unknown among the monks. To the Prior’s question what he wanted, he gazed upon the brotherhood, and only answered, “Peace!” Afterwards, in

private conversation, he communicated his name and spoke about his poem. A portion of the "Divine Comedy" composed in the Italian tongue aroused Ilario's wonder, and led him to inquire why his guest had not followed the usual course of learned poets by committing his thoughts to Latin. Dante replied that he had first intended to write in that language, and that he had gone so far as to begin the poem in Virgilian hexameters. Reflection upon the altered conditions of society in that age led him, however, to reconsider the matter; and he was resolved to tune another lyre, "suited to the sense of modern men." "For," said he, "it is idle to set solid food before the lips of sucklings."

If we can trust Fra Ilario's letter as a genuine record, which is unhappily a matter of some doubt, we have in this narration not only a picturesque, almost a melodramatically picturesque glimpse of the poet's apparition to those quiet monks in their seagirt house of peace, but also an interesting record of the destiny which presided over the first great work of literary art in a distinctly modern language.

#### IV. LA SPEZZIA.

While we were at Fosdinovo the sky filmed over, and there came a halo round the sun. This portended change; and by evening, after we had reached La Spezzia, earth, sea, and air were conscious of a coming tempest. At night I went down to the shore, and paced the sea-wall they have lately built along the Rada. The moon was up, but overdriven with dry smoky clouds, now thickening to blackness over the whole bay, now leaving intervals through which the light poured fitfully and fretfully upon the wrinkled waves; and ever and anon they shuddered with electric gleams which were not actual lightning. Heaven seemed to be descending on the sea; one might have fancied that some powerful charms were

drawing down the moon with influence malign upon those still resisting billows. For not as yet the gulf was troubled to its depth, and not as yet the breakers dashed in foam against the moonlight-smitten promontories. There was but an uneasy murmuring of wave to wave ; a whispering of wind, that stooped its wing and hissed along the surface, and withdrew into the mystery of clouds again ; a momentary chafing of churned water round the harbour piers, subsiding into silence petulant and sullen. I leaned against an iron stanchion and longed for the sea's message. But nothing came to me, and the drowned secret of Shelley's death those waves which were his grave revealed not.

“ Howler and scooper of storms ! capricious and dainty sea ! ”

Meanwhile the incantation swelled in shrillness, the electric shudders deepened. Alone in this elemental overture to tempest I took no note of time, but felt, through self-abandonment to the symphonic influence, how sea and air, and clouds akin to both, were dealing with each other complainingly, and in compliance to some maker of unrest within them. A touch upon my shoulder broke this trance ; I turned and saw a boy beside me in a coastguard's uniform. Francesco was on patrol that night ; but my English accent soon assured him that I was no contrabbandiere, and he too leaned against the stanchion and told me his short story. He was in his nineteenth year, and came from Florence, where his people live in the Borgo Ognissanti. He had all the brightness of the Tuscan folk, a sort of innocent malice mixed with *espièglerie*. It was diverting to see the airs he gave himself on the strength of his new military dignity, his gun, and uniform, and night duty on the shore. I could not help humming to myself *Non più andrai* ; for Francesco was a sort of Tuscan Cherubino. We talked about picture galleries and libraries in Florence, and I had to hear his favourite passages from the Italian poets. And then



there came the plots of Jules Verne's stories and marvellous narrations about *l'uomo cavallo*, *l'uomo volante*, *l'uomo pesce*. The last of these personages turned out to be Paolo Bojnton (so pronounced), who had swam the Arno in his diving dress, passing the several bridges, and when he came to the great weir "allora tutti stare con bocca aperta." Meanwhile the storm grew serious, and our conversation changed. Francesco told me about the terrible sun-stricken sand shores of the Riviera, burning in summer noon, over which the coastguard has to tramp, their perils from falling stones in storm, and the trains that come rushing from those narrow tunnels on the midnight line of march. It is a hard life; and the thirst for adventure which drove this boy—il più matto di tutta la famiglia—to adopt it, seems well-nigh quenched. And still, with a return to Giulio Verne, he talked enthusiastically of deserting, of getting on board a merchant ship, and working his way to southern islands where wonders are.

A furious blast swept the whole sky for a moment almost clear. The moonlight fell, with racing cloud-shadows, upon sea and hills; the lights of Lerici, the great *fanali* at the entrance of the gulf, and Francesco's upturned handsome face. Then all again was whirled in mist and foam; one breaker smote the sea-wall in a surge of froth, another plunged upon its heels; with inconceivable swiftness came rain; lightning deluged the expanse of surf, and showed the windy trees bent landward by the squall. It was long past midnight now, and the storm was on us for the space of three days.

#### V.—PORTO VENERE.

For the next three days the wind went worrying on, and a line of surf leapt on the sea-wall always to the same height. The hills all around were inky black and weary.

At night the wild libeccio still rose, with floods of rain and

lightning poured upon the waste. I thought of the Florentine patrol. Is he out in it, and where?

At last there came a lull. When we rose on the fourth morning, the sky was sulky, spent and sleepy after storm—the air as soft and tepid as boiled milk or steaming flannel. We drove along the shore to Porto Venere, passing the arsenals and dockyards, which have changed the face of Spezzia since Shelley knew it. This side of the gulf is not so rich in vegetation as the other, probably because it lies open to the winds from the Carrara mountains. The chestnuts come down to the shore in many places, bringing with them the wild mountain-side. To make up for this lack of luxuriance, the coast is furrowed with a succession of tiny harbours, where the fishing-boats rest at anchor. There are many villages upon the spurs of hills, and on the headlands naval stations, hospitals, lazaretti, and prisons. A prickly bindweed (the *Smilax sarsaparilla*) forms a feature in the near landscape, with its creamy odoriferous blossoms, coral berries, and glossy thorned leaves.

A turn of the road brought Porto Venere in sight, and on its grey walls flashed a gleam of watery sunlight. The village consists of one long narrow street, the houses on the left side hanging sheer above the sea. Their doors at the back open on to cliffs which drop about fifty feet upon the water. A line of ancient walls, with medieval battlements and shells of chambers suspended midway between earth and sky, runs up the rock behind the town; and this wall is pierced with a deep gateway above which the inn is piled. We had our lunch in a room opening upon the town-gate, adorned with a deep-cut Pisan arch enclosing images and frescoes—a curious episode in a place devoted to the jollity of smugglers and seafaring folk. The whole house was such as Tintoretto loved to paint—huge wooden rafters; open chimneys with pent-house canopies of stone, where the cauldrons hung above logs of chestnut; rude low tables spread with coarse linen embroidered

at the edges, and laden with plates of fishes, fruit, quaint glass, big-bellied jugs of earthenware, and flasks of yellow wine. The people of the place were lounging round in lazy attitudes. There were odd nooks and corners everywhere; unexpected staircases with windows slanting through the thickness of the town-wall; pictures of saints; high-zoned serving women, on whose broad shoulders lay big coral beads; smoke-blackened roofs, and balconies that opened on the sea. The house was inexhaustible in motives for pictures.

We walked up the street, attended by a rabble rout of boys—*diavoli scatenati*—clean, grinning, white-teethed, who kept incessantly shouting, “Soldo, soldo!” I do not know why these sea-urchins are so far more irrepressible than their land brethren. But it is always thus in Italy. They take an imperturbable delight in noise and mere annoyance. I shall never forget the sea-roar of Porto Venere, with that shrill obligato, “Soldo, soldo, soldo!” rattling like a dropping fire from lungs of brass.

At the end of Porto Venere is a withered and abandoned city, climbing the cliffs of S. Pietro; and on the headland stands the ruined church, built by Pisans with alternate rows of white and black marble, upon the site of an old temple of Venus. This is a modest and pure piece of Gothic architecture, fair in desolation, refined and dignified, and not unworthy in its grace of the dead Cyprian goddess. Through its broken lancets the sea-wind whistles and the vast reaches of the Tyrrhene gulf are seen. Samphire sprouts between the blocks of marble, and in sheltered nooks the caper hangs her beautiful purpureal snowy bloom.

The headland is a bold block of white limestone stained with red. It has the pitch of Exmoor stooping to the sea near Lynton. To north, as one looks along the coast, the line is broken by Porto Fino's amethystine promontory; and in the vaporous distance we could trace the Riviera moun-

tains, shadowy and blue. The sea came roaring, rolling in with tawny breakers; but, far out, it sparkled in pure azure, and the cloud-shadows over it were violet. Where Corsica should have been seen, soared banks of fleecy, broad-domed alabaster clouds.

This point, once dedicate to Venus, now to Peter—both, be it remembered, fishers of men—is one of the most singular in Europe. The island of Palmaria, rich in veined marbles, shelters the port; so that outside the sea rages, while underneath the town, reached by a narrow strait, there is a windless calm. It was not without reason that our Lady of Beauty took this fair gulf to herself; and now that she has long been dispossessed, her memory lingers yet in names. For Porto Venere remembers her, and Lerici is only Eryx. There is a grotto here, where an inscription tells us that Byron once “tempted the Ligurian waves.” It is just such a natural sea-cave as might have inspired Euripides when he described the refuge of Orestes in “Iphigenia.”

#### VI.—LERICI.

Libeccio at last had swept the sky clear. The gulf was ridged with foam-fleeced breakers, and the water churned into green, tawny wastes. But overhead there flew the softest clouds, all silvery, dispersed in flocks. It is the day for pilgrimage to what was Shelley's home.

After following the shore a little way, the road to Lerici breaks into the low hills which part La Spezia from Sarzana. The soil is red, and overgrown with arbutus and pinaster, like the country around Cannes. Through the scattered trees it winds gently upwards, with frequent views across the gulf, and then descends into a land rich with olives—a genuine Riviera landscape, where the mountain-slopes are hoary, and spikelets of innumerable light-flashing leaves twinkle against a



blue sea, misty-deep. The walls here are not unfrequently adorned with bas-reliefs of Carrara marble — saints and madonnas very delicately wrought, as though they were love-labours of sculptors who had passed a summer on this shore. San Terenzio is soon discovered low upon the sands to the right, nestling under little cliffs; and then the high-built castle of Lerici comes in sight, looking across the bay to Porto Venere—one Aphrodite calling to the other, with the foam between. The village is piled around its cove with tall and picturesquely-coloured houses; the molo and the fishing-boats lie just beneath the castle. There is one point of the descending carriage road where all this gracefulness is seen, framed by the boughs of olive branches, swaying, wind-ruffled, laughing the many-twinkling smiles of ocean back from their grey leaves. Here *Erycina ridens* is at home. And, as we stayed to dwell upon the beauty of the scene, came women from the bay below—barefooted, straight as willow wands, with burnished copper bowls upon their heads. These women have the port of goddesses, deep-bosomed, with the length of thigh and springing ankles that betoken strength no less than elasticity and grace. The hair of some of them was golden, rippling in little curls around brown brows and glowing eyes. Pale lilac blent with orange on their dress, and coral beads hung from their ears.

At Lerici we took a boat and pushed into the rolling breakers. Christian now felt the movement of the sea for the first time. This was rather a rude trial, for the grey-maned monsters played, as it seemed, at will with our cockle-shell, tumbling in dolphin curves to reach the shore. Our boatmen knew all about Shelley and the Casa Magni. It is not at Lerici, but close to San Terenzio, upon the south side of the village. Looking across the bay from the molo, one could clearly see its square white mass, tiled roof, and terrace built on rude arcades with a broad orange awning. Trelawny's

description hardly prepares one for so considerable a place. I think the English exiles of that period must have been exacting if the Casa Magni seemed to them no better than a bathing-house.

We left our boat at the jetty, and walked through some gardens to the villa. There we were kindly entertained by the present occupiers, who, when I asked them whether such visits as ours were not a great annoyance, gently but feelingly replied: "It is not so bad now as it used to be." The English gentleman who rents the Casa Magni has known it uninterruptedly since Shelley's death, and has used it for *villeggiatura* during the last thirty years. We found him in the central sitting-room, which readers of Trelawny's *Recollections* have so often pictured to themselves. The large oval table, the settees round the walls, and some of the pictures are still unchanged. As we sat talking, I laughed to think of that luncheon party, when Shelley lost his clothes, and came naked, dripping with sea-water, into the room, protected by the skirts of the sympathising waiting-maid. And then I wondered where they found him on the night when he stood screaming in his sleep, after the vision of his veiled self, with its question, "*Siete soddisfatto?*"

There were great ilexes behind the house in Shelley's time, which have been cut down, and near these he is said to have sat and written the *Triumph of Life*. Some new houses, too, have been built between the villa and the town; otherwise the place is unaltered. Only an awning has been added to protect the terrace from the sun. I walked out on this terrace, where Shelley used to listen to Jane's singing. The sea was fretting at its base, just as Mrs. Shelley says it did when the Don Juan disappeared.

From San Terenzio we walked back to Lerici through olive woods, attended by a memory which toned the almost overpowering beauty of the place to sadness.

## VII.—VIAREGGIO.

The same memory drew us, a few days later, to the spot where Shelley's body was burned. Viareggio is fast becoming a fashionable watering-place for the people of Florence and Lucca, who seek fresher air and simpler living than Livorno offers. It has the usual new inns and improvised lodging-houses of such places, built on the outskirts of a little fishing village, with a boundless stretch of noble sands. There is a wooden pier on which we walked, watching the long roll of waves, foam-flaked, and quivering with moonlight. The Apennines faded into the grey sky beyond, and the sea-wind was good to breathe. There is a feeling of "immensity, liberty, action" here, which is not common in Italy. It reminds us of England; and to-night the Mediterranean had the rough force of a tidal sea.

Morning revealed beauty enough in Viareggio to surprise even one who expects from Italy all forms of loveliness. The sand-dunes stretch for miles between the sea and a low wood of stone pines, with the Carrara hills descending from their glittering pinnacles by long lines to the headlands of the Spezzian Gulf. The immeasurable distance was all painted in sky-blue and amethyst; then came the golden green of the dwarf firs; and then dry yellow in the grasses of the dunes; and then the many-tinted sea, with surf tossed up against the furthest cliffs. It is a wonderful and tragic view, to which no painter but the Roman Costa has done justice; and he, it may be said, has made this landscape of the Carrarese his own. The space between sand and pine-wood was covered with faint, yellow, evening primroses. They flickered like little harmless flames in sun and shadow, and the spires of the Carrara range were giant flames transformed to marble. The memory of that day described by Trelawny in a passage of

immortal English prose, when he and Byron and Leigh Hunt stood beside the funeral pyre, and libations were poured, and the *Cor Cordium* was found inviolate among the ashes, turned all my thoughts to flame beneath the gentle autumn sky.

Still haunted by these memories, we took the carriage road to Pisa, over which Shelley's friends had hurried to and fro through those last days. It passes an immense forest of stone-pines—aisles and avenues ; undergrowth of ilex, laurustinus, gorse, and myrtle ; the crowded cyclamens, the solemn silence of the trees ; the winds hushed in their velvet roof and stationary domes of verdure.

## *MONTE OLIVETO.*

### I.

IN former days the traveller had choice of two old hostelries in the chief street of Siena. Here, if he was fortunate, he might secure a prophet's chamber, with a view across tiled houseroofs to the distant Tuscan champaign—glimpses of russet field and olive-garden framed by jutting city walls, which in some measure compensated for much discomfort. He now betakes himself to the more modern Albergo di Siena, overlooking the public promenade La Lizza. Horse-chestnuts and acacias make a pleasant foreground to a prospect of considerable extent. The front of the house is turned toward Belcaro and the mountains between Grosseto and Volterra. Sideways its windows command the brown bulk of San Domenico, and the Duomo, set like a marble coronet upon the forehead of the town. When we arrived there one October afternoon the sun was setting amid flying clouds and watery yellow spaces of pure sky, with a wind blowing soft and humid from the sea. Long after he had sunk below the hills, a fading chord of golden and rose-coloured tints burned on the city. The cathedral bell-tower was glistening with recent rain, and we could see right through its lancet windows to the clear blue heavens beyond. Then, as the day descended into evening, the autumn trees assumed that wonderful effect of luminousness self-evolved, and the red brick walls that crimson after-glow, which Tuscan twilight takes from singular transparency of atmosphere.



It is hardly possible to define the specific character of each Italian city, assigning its proper share to natural circumstances, to the temper of the population, and to the monuments of art in which these elements of nature and of human qualities are blended. The fusion is too delicate and subtle for complete analysis; and the total effect in each particular case may best be compared to that impressed on us by a strong personality, making itself felt in the minutest details. Climate, situation, ethnological conditions, the political vicissitudes of past ages, the bias of the people to certain industries and occupations, the emergence of distinguished men at critical epochs, have all contributed their quota to the composition of an individuality which abides long after the locality has lost its ancient vigour.

Since the year 1557, when Gian Giacomo de' Medici laid the country of Siena waste, levelled her luxurious suburbs, and delivered her famine-stricken citizens to the tyranny of the Grand Duke Cosimo, this town has gone on dreaming in suspended decadence. Yet the epithet which was given to her in her days of glory, the title of "Fair Soft Siena," still describes the city. She claims it by right of the gentle manners, joyous but sedate, of her inhabitants, by the grace of their pure Tuscan speech, and by the unique delicacy of her architecture. Those palaces of brick, with finely-moulded lancet windows, and the lovely use of sculptured marbles in pilastered colonnades, are fit abodes for the nobles who reared them five centuries ago, of whose refined and costly living we read in the pages of Dante or of Folgore da San Gemignano. And though the necessities of modern life, the decay of wealth, the dwindling of old aristocracy, and the absorption of what was once an independent state in the Italian nation, have obliterated that large signorial splendour of the Middle Ages, we feel that the modern Sieneese are not unworthy of their courteous ancestry.

Superficially, much of the present charm of Siena consists in the soft opening valleys, the glimpses of long blue hills and fertile country-side, framed by irregular brown houses stretching along the slopes on which the town is built, and losing themselves abruptly in olive fields and orchards. This element of beauty, which brings the city into immediate relation with the country, is indeed not peculiar to Siena. We find it in Perugia, in Assisi, in Montepulciano, in nearly all the hill towns of Umbria and Tuscany. But their landscape is often tragic and austere, while this is always suave. City and country blend here in delightful amity. Neither yields that sense of aloofness which stirs melancholy.

The most charming district in the immediate neighbourhood of Siena lies westward, near Belcaro, a villa high up on a hill. It is a region of deep lanes and golden-green oak-woods, with cypresses and stone-pines, and little streams in all directions flowing over the brown sandstone. The country is like some parts of rural England—Devonshire or Sussex. Not only is the sandstone here, as there, broken into deep gullies; but the vegetation is much the same. Tufted spleenwort, primroses, and broom tangle the hedges under boughs of hornbeam and sweet-chestnut. This is the landscape which the two sixteenth century novelists of Siena, Fortini and Sermini, so lovingly depicted in their tales. Of literature absorbing in itself the specific character of a country, and conveying it to the reader less by description than by sustained quality of style, I know none to surpass Fortini's sketches. The prospect from Belcaro is one of the finest to be seen in Tuscany. The villa stands at a considerable elevation, and commands an immense extent of hill and dale. Nowhere, except Maremma-wards, a level plain. The Tuscan mountains, from Monte Amiata westward to Volterra, round Valdelsa, down to Montepulciano and Radicofani, with their innumerable windings and intricacies of descending

valleys, are dappled with light and shade from flying storm-clouds, sunshine here and there cloud-shadows. Girdling the villa stands a grove of ilex-trees, cut so as to embrace its high-built walls with dark continuous green. In the courtyard are lemon-trees and pomegranates laden with fruit. From a terrace on the roof the whole wide view is seen; and here upon a parapet, from which we leaned one autumn afternoon, my friend discovered this *graffito*: "*E vidi e piansi il fato amaro!*"—"I gazed, and gazing, wept the bitterness of fate."

## II.

The prevailing note of Siena and the Sieneſe ſeems, as I have ſaid, to be a ſoft and tranquil grace; yet this people had one of the ſtormieſt and maddeſt of Italian hiſtories. They were paſſionate in love and hate, vehement in their popular amuſements, almoſt frantic in their political conduct of affairs. The luxury, for which Dante blamed them, the levity De Comines noticed in their government, found counterpoize in more than uſual piety and fervour. S. Bernardino, the great preacher and peace-maker of the Middle Ages; S. Catherine, the wortheſt of all women to be canon-iſed; the bleſſed Colombini, who founded the Order of the Geſuati or Brothers of the Poor in Chriſt; the bleſſed Bernardo, who founded that of Monte Oliveto; were all Sieneſe. Few cities have given four ſuch ſaints to modern Chriſtendom. The biography of one of theſe may ſerve as prelude to an account of the Sieneſe monaſtery of Oliveto Maggiore.

The family of Tolomei was among the nobleſt of the Sieneſe ariſtocracy. On May 10, 1272, Mino Tolomei and his wife Fulvia, of the Tancredi, had a ſon whom they chriſtened Giovanni, but who, when he entered the religious life, aſſumed the name of Bernard, in memory of the great Abbot of Clairvaux. Of this child, Fulvia is ſaid to have dreamed,



long before his birth, that he assumed the form of a white swan, and sang melodiously, and settled in the boughs of an olive-tree, whence afterwards he winged his way to heaven amid a flock of swans as dazzling white as he. The boy was educated in the Dominican Cloister at Siena, under the care of his uncle Cristoforo Tolomei. There, and afterwards in the fraternity of S. Ansano, he felt that impulse towards a life of piety, which after a short but brilliant episode of secular ambition, was destined to return with overwhelming force upon his nature. He was a youth of promise, and at the age of sixteen he obtained the doctorate in philosophy and both laws, civil and canonical. The Tolomei upon this occasion adorned their palaces and threw them open to the people of Siena. The Republic hailed with acclamation the early honours of a noble, born to be one of their chief leaders. Soon after this event Mino obtained for his son from the Emperor the title of Cæsarian Knight; and when the diploma arrived, new festivities proclaimed the fortunate youth to his fellow-citizens. Bernardo cased his limbs in steel, and rode in procession with ladies and young nobles through the streets. The ceremonies of a knight's reception in Siena at that period were magnificent. From contemporary chronicles and from the sonnets written by Folgore dâ San Gemignano for a similar occasion, we gather that the whole resources of a wealthy family and all their friends were strained to the utmost to do honour to the order of chivalry. Open house was held for several days. Rich presents of jewels, armour, dresses, chargers were freely distributed. Tournaments alternated with dances. But the climax of the pageant was the novice's investiture with sword and spurs and belt in the cathedral. This, as it appears from a record of the year 1326, actually took place in the great marble pulpit carved by the Pisani; and the most illustrious knights of his acquaintance were summoned by the squire to act as sponsors for his fealty.

It is said that young Bernardo Tolomei's head was turned to vanity by these honours showered upon him in his earliest manhood. Yet, after a short period of aberration, he rejoined his confraternity and mortified his flesh by discipline and strict attendance on the poor. The time had come, however, when he should choose a career suitable to his high rank. He devoted himself to jurisprudence, and began to lecture publicly on law. Already at the age of twenty-five his fellow-citizens admitted him to the highest political offices, and in the legend of his life it is written, not without exaggeration doubtless, that he ruled the State. There is, however, no reason to suppose that he did not play an important part in its government. Though a just and virtuous statesman, Bernardo now forgot the special service of God, and gave himself with heart and soul to mundane interests. At the age of forty, supported by the wealth, alliances, and reputation of his semi-princely house, he had become one of the most considerable party-leaders in that age of faction. If we may trust his monastic biographer, he was aiming at nothing less than the tyranny of Siena. But in that year, when he was forty, a change, which can only be described as conversion, came over him. He had advertised a public disputation, in which he proposed before all comers to solve the most arduous problems of scholastic science. The concourse was great, the assembly brilliant; but the hero of the day, who had designed it for his glory, was stricken with sudden blindness. In one moment he comprehended the internal void he had created for his soul, and the blindness of the body was illumination to the spirit. The pride, power, and splendour of this world seemed to him a smoke that passes. God, penitence, eternity appeared in all the awful clarity of an authentic vision. He fell upon his knees and prayed to Mary that he might receive his sight again. This boon was granted; but the revelation which had come to him in blindness was not withdrawn.

Meanwhile the hall of disputation was crowded with an expectant audience. Bernardo rose from his knees, made his entry, and ascended the chair; but instead of the scholastic subtleties he had designed to treat, he pronounced the old text, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Afterwards, attended by two noble comrades, Patrizio Patrizzi and Ambrogio Piccolomini, he went forth into the wilderness. For the human soul, at strife with strange experience, betakes itself instinctively to solitude. Not only prophets of Israel, saints of the Thebaid, and founders of religions in the mystic East have done so; even the Greek Menander recognised, although he sneered at, the phenomenon. "The desert, they say, is the place for discoveries." For the mediæval mind it had peculiar attractions. The wilderness these comrades chose was Accona, a doleful place, hemmed in with earthen precipices, some fifteen miles to the south of Siena. Of his vast possessions Bernardo retained but this—

The lonesome lodge,  
That stood so low in a lonely glen.

The rest of his substance he abandoned to the poor. This was in 1313, the very year of the Emperor Henry VII.'s death at Buonconvento, which is a little walled town between Siena and the desert of Accona. Whether Bernardo's retirement was in any way due to the extinction of immediate hope for the Ghibelline party by this event, we do not gather from his legend. That, as is natural, refers his action wholly to the operation of divine grace. Yet we may remember how a more illustrious refugee, the singer of the Divine Comedy, betook himself upon the same occasion to the lonely convent of Fonte Avellana on the Alps of Catria, and meditated there the cantos of his Purgatory. While Bernardo Tolomei was founding the Order of Monte Oliveto, Dante penned his

letter to the cardinals of Italy : *Quomodo sola sedet civitas plena populo : facta est quasi vidua domina gentium.*

Bernardo and his friends hollowed with their own hands grottos in the rock, and strewed their stone beds with withered chestnut-leaves. For S. Scolastica, the sister of S. Benedict, they built a little chapel. Their food was wild fruit, and their drink the water of the brook. Through the day they delved, for it was in their mind to turn the wilderness into a land of plenty. By night they meditated on eternal truth. The contrast between their rude life and the delicate nurture of Sienese nobles, in an age when Siena had become a by-word for luxury, must have been cruel. But it fascinated the mediæval imagination, and the three anchorites were speedily joined by recruits of a like temper. As yet the new-born order had no rules; for Bernardo, when he renounced the world, embraced humility. The brethren were bound together only by the ties of charity. They lived in common; and under their sustained efforts Accona soon became a garden.

The society could not, however, hold together without further organisation. It began to be ill spoken of, inasmuch as vulgar minds can recognise no good except in what is formed upon a pattern they are familiar with. Then Bernardo had a vision. In his sleep he saw a ladder of light ascending to the heavens. Above sat Jesus with Our Lady in white raiment, and the celestial hierarchies around them were attired in white. Up the ladder, led by angels, climbed men in vesture of dazzling white; and among these Bernardo recognised his own companions. Soon after this dream, he called Ambrogio Piccolomini, and bade him get ready for a journey to the Pope at Avignon.

John XXII. received the pilgrims graciously, and gave them letters to the Bishop of Arezzo, commanding him to



furnish the new brotherhood with one of the rules authorised by Holy Church for governance of a monastic order. Guido Tarlati, of the great Pietra-mala house, was Bishop and despot of Arezzo at this epoch. A man less in harmony with cœnobitical enthusiasm than this warrior prelate, could scarcely have been found. Yet attendance to such matters formed part of his business, and the legend even credits him with an inspired dream; for Our Lady appeared to him, and said: "I love the valley of Accona and its pious solitaires. Give them the rule of Benedict. But thou shalt strip them of their mourning weeds, and clothe them in white raiment, the symbol of my virgin purity. Their hermitage shall change its name, and henceforth shall be called Mount Olivet, in memory of the ascension of my divine Son, the which took place upon the Mount of Olives. I take this family beneath my own protection; and therefore it is my will it should be called henceforth the congregation of S. Mary of Mount Olivet." After this, the Blessed Virgin took forethought for the heraldic designs of her monks, dictating to Guido Tarlati the blazon they still bear; it is of three hills or, whereof the third and highest is surmounted with a cross gules, and from the meeting-point of the three hillocks upon either hand a branch of olive vert. This was in 1319. In 1324, John XXII. confirmed the order, and in 1344 it was further approved by Clement VI. Affiliated societies sprang up in several Tuscan cities; and in 1347, Bernardo Tolomei, at that time General of the Order, held a chapter of its several houses. The next year was the year of the great plague or Black Death. Bernardo bade his brethren leave their seclusion, and go forth on works of mercy among the sick. Some went to Florence, some to Siena, others to the smaller hill-set towns of Tuscany. All were bidden to assemble on the Feast of the Assumption at Siena. Here the founder addressed his spiritual children for the last time.

Soon afterwards he died himself, at the age of seventy-seven, and the place of his grave is not known. He was beatified by the Church for his great virtues.

### III.

At noon we started, four of us, in an open waggonette with a pair of horses, for Monte Oliveto, the luggage heaped mountain-high and tied in a top-heavy mass above us. After leaving the gateway, with its massive fortifications and frescoed arches, the road passes into a dull earthy country, very much like some parts—and not the best parts—of England. The beauty of the Sienese contado is clearly on the sandstone, not upon the clay. Hedges, haystacks, isolated farms—all were English in their details. Only the vines, and mulberries, and wattled waggons drawn by oxen, most Roman in aspect, reminded us we were in Tuscany. In such *carpenta* may the vestal virgins have ascended the Capitol. It is the primitive war-chariot also, capable of holding four with ease; and Romulus may have mounted with the images of Roman gods in even such a vehicle to Latiarian Jove upon the Alban hill. Nothing changes in Italy. The wooden ploughs are those which Virgil knew. The sight of one of them would save an intelligent lad much trouble in mastering a certain passage of the Georgics.

Siena is visible behind us nearly the whole way to Buonconvento, a little town where the Emperor Henry VII. died, as it was supposed, of poison, in 1313. It is still circled with the wall and gates built by the Sienese in 1366, and is a fair specimen of an intact mediæval stronghold. Here we leave the main road, and break into a country-track across a bed of sandstone, with the delicate volcanic lines of Monte Amiata in front, and the aerial pile of Montalcino to our right. The pyracanthus bushes in the hedge yield their

clusters of bright yellow berries, mingled with more glowing hues of red from haws and glossy hips. On the pale grey earthen slopes men and women are plying the long Sabellian hoes of their forefathers, and ploughmen are driving furrows down steep hills. The labour of the husbandmen in Tuscany is very graceful, partly, I think, because it is so primitive, but also because the people have an eminently noble carriage, and are fashioned on the lines of antique statues. I noticed two young *contadini* in one field, whom Frederick Walker might have painted with the dignity of Pheidias form. They were guiding their ploughs along a hedge of olive-trees, slanting upwards, the white-horned oxen moving slowly through the marl, and the lads bending to press the plough-shares home. It was a delicate piece of colour—the grey mist of olive branches, the warm smoking earth, the creamy flanks of the oxen, the brown limbs and dark eyes of the men, who paused awhile to gaze at us, with shadows cast upon the furrows from their tall straight figures. Then they turned to their work again, and rhythmic movement was added to the picture. I wonder when an Italian artist will condescend to pluck these flowers of beauty, so abundantly offered by the simplest things in his own native land. Each city has an *Accademia delle Belle Arti*, and there is no lack of students. But the painters, having learned their trade, make copies ten times distant from the truth of famous masterpieces for the American market. Few seem to look beyond their picture galleries. Thus the democratic art, the art of Millet, the art of life and nature and the people, waits.

As we mount, the soil grows of a richer brown; and there are woods of oak where herds of swine are feeding on the acorns. Monte Oliveto comes in sight—a mass of red brick, backed up with cypresses, among dishevelled earthy precipices, *balze* as they are called—upon the hill below the village of Chiusure. This Chiusure was once a promising

town; but the life was crushed out of it in the throes of mediæval civil wars, and since the thirteenth century it has been dwindling to a hamlet. The struggle for existence, from which the larger communes of this district, Siena and Montepulciano, emerged at the expense of their neighbours, must have been tragical. The *baize* now grow sterner, drier, more dreadful. We see how deluges outpoured from thunderstorms bring down their viscous streams of loam, destroying in an hour the terraces it took a year to build, and spreading wasteful mud upon the scanty corn-fields. The people call this soil *creta*; but it seems to be less like a chalk than a marl, or *marna*. It is always washing away into ravines and gullies, exposing the roots of trees, and rendering the tillage of the land a thankless labour. One marvels how any vegetation has the faith to settle on its dreary waste, or how men have the patience, generation after generation, to renew the industry, still beginning, never ending, which reclaims such wildernesses. Comparing Monte Oliveto with similar districts of cretaceous soil—with the country, for example, between Pienza and San Quirico—we perceive how much is owed to the perseverance of the monks whom Bernard Tolomei planted here. So far as it is clothed at all with crop and wood, this is their service.

At last we climb the crowning hill, emerge from a copse of oak, glide along a terraced pathway through the broom, and find ourselves in front of the convent gateway. A substantial tower of red brick, machicolated at the top and pierced with small square windows, guards this portal, reminding us that at some time or other the monks found it needful to arm their solitude against a force descending from Chiusure. There is an avenue of slender cypresses; and over the gate, protected by a jutting roof, shines a fresco of Madonna and Child. Passing rapidly downwards, we are in the courtyard of the monastery, among its stables, barns, and out-



houses, with the forlorn bulk of the huge red building, spreading wide, and towering up above us. As good luck ruled our arrival, we came face to face with the Abbate de Negro, who administers the domain of Monte Oliveto for the Government of Italy, and exercises a kindly hospitality to chance-comers. He was standing near the church, which, with its tall square campanile, breaks the long stern outline of the convent. The whole edifice, it may be said, is composed of a red brick inclining to purple in tone, which contrasts not unpleasantly with the lustrous green of the cypresses, and the glaucous sheen of olives. Advantage has been taken of a steep crest; and the monastery, enlarged from time to time through the last five centuries, has here and there been reared upon gigantic buttresses, which jut upon the *balze* at a sometimes giddy height.

The Abbate received us with true courtesy, and gave us spacious rooms, three cells apiece, facing Siena and the western mountains. There is accommodation, he told us, for three hundred monks; but only three are left in it. As this order was confined to members of the nobility, each of the religious had his own apartment—not a cubicle such as the uninstructed dream of when they read of monks, but separate chambers for sleep and study and recreation.

In the middle of the vast sad landscape, the place is still, with a silence that can be almost heard. The deserted state of those innumerable cells, those echoing corridors and shadowy cloisters, exercises over-powering tyranny over the imagination. Siena is so far away, and Montalcino is so faintly outlined on its airy parapet, that these cities only deepen our sense of desolation. It is a relief to mark at no great distance on the hill-side a contadino guiding his oxen, and from a lonely farm yon column of ascending smoke. At least the world goes on, and life is somewhere resonant with song. But here there rests a pall of silence among the oak-

groves and the cypresses and *balze*. As I leaned and mused, while Christian (my good friend and fellow-traveller from the Grisons) made our beds, a melancholy sunset flamed up from a rampart of cloud, built like a city of the air above the mountains of Volterra—fire issuing from its battlements, and smiting the fretted roof of heaven above. It was a conflagration of celestial rose upon the saddest purples and cavernous recesses of intensest azure.

We had an excellent supper in the visitors' refectory—soup, good bread and country wine, ham, a roast chicken with potatoes, a nice white cheese made of sheep's milk, and grapes for dessert. The kind Abbate sat by, and watched his four guests eat, tapping his tortoise-shell snuff-box, and telling us many interesting things about the past and present state of the convent. Our company was completed with Lupo, the pet cat, and Pirro, a woolly Corsican dog, very good friends, and both enormously voracious. Lupo in particular engraved himself upon the memory of Christian, into whose large legs he thrust his claws, when the cheese-parings and scraps were not supplied him with sufficient promptitude. I never saw a hungrier and bolder cat. It made one fancy that even the mice had been exiled from this solitude. And truly the rule of the monastic order, no less than the habit of Italian gentlemen, is frugal in the matter of the table, beyond the conception of northern folk.

Monte Oliveto, the Superior told us, owned thirty-two *poderi*, or large farms, of which five have recently been sold. They are worked on the *mezzeria* system; whereby peasants and proprietors divide the produce of the soil; and which he thinks inferior for developing its resources to that of *affitto*, or lease-holding.

The *contadini* live in scattered houses; and he says the estate would be greatly improved by doubling the number of these dwellings, and letting the subdivided farms to more

energetic people. The village of Chiusure is inhabited by labourers. The contadini are poor : a dower, for instance, of fifty *lire* is thought something : whereas near Genoa, upon the leasehold system, a farmer may sometimes provide a dower of twenty thousand *lire*. The country produces grain of different sorts, excellent oil, and timber. It also yields a tolerable red wine. The Government makes from eight to nine per cent upon the value of the land, employing him and his two religious brethren as agents.

In such conversation the evening passed. We rested well in large hard beds with dry rough sheets. But there was a fretful wind abroad, which went wailing round the convent walls and rattling the doors in its deserted corridors. One of our party had been placed by himself at the end of a long suite of apartments, with balconies commanding the wide sweep of hills that Monte Amiata crowns. He confessed in the morning to having passed a restless night, tormented by the ghostly noises of the wind, a wanderer, "like the world's rejected guest," through those untenanted chambers. The olives tossed their filmy boughs in twilight underneath his windows, sighing and shuddering, with a sheen in them as eery as that of willows by some haunted mere.

#### IV.

The great attraction to students of Italian art in the convent of Monte Oliveto is a large square cloister, covered with wall-paintings by Luca Signorelli and Giovannantonio Bazzi, surnamed Il Sodoma. These represent various episodes in the life of S. Benedict ; while one picture, in some respects the best of the whole series, is devoted to the founder of the Olivetan Order, Bernardo Tolomei, dispensing the rule of his institution to a consistory of white-robed monks. Signorelli, that great master of Cortona, may be studied to better advan-

tage elsewhere, especially at Orvieto and in his native city. His work in this cloister, consisting of eight frescoes, has been much spoiled by time and restoration. Yet it can be referred to a good period of his artistic activity (the year 1497) and displays much which is specially characteristic of his manner. In Totila's barbaric train, he painted a crowd of fierce emphatic figures, combining all ages and the most varied attitudes, and reproducing with singular vividness the Italian soldiers of adventure of his day. We see before us the long-haired followers of Braccio and the Baglioni; their handsome savage faces; their brawny limbs clad in the particoloured hose and jackets of that period; feathered caps stuck sideways on their heads; a splendid swagger in their straddling legs. Female beauty lay outside the sphere of Signorelli's sympathy; and in the Monte Oliveto cloister he was not called upon to paint it. But none of the Italian masters felt more keenly, or more powerfully represented in their work, the muscular vigour of young manhood. Two of the remaining frescoes, different from these in motive, might be selected as no less characteristic of Signorelli's manner. One represents three sturdy monks, clad in brown, working with all their strength to stir a boulder, which has been bewitched, and needs a miracle to move it from its place. The square and powerfully outlined drawing of these figures is beyond all praise for its effect of massive solidity. The other shows us the interior of a fifteenth century tavern, where two monks are regaling themselves upon the sly. A country girl, with shapely arms and shoulders, her upper skirts tucked round the ample waist to which broad sweeping lines of back and breasts descend, is serving wine. The exuberance of animal life, the freedom of attitude expressed in this, the mainly interesting figure of the composition, show that Signorelli might have been a great master of realistic painting. Nor are the accessories less effective. A wide-roofed kitchen chimney, a page-boy leaving the room by



a flight of steps, which leads to the house door, and the table at which the truant monks are seated, complete a picture of homely Italian life. It may still be matched out of many an inn in this hill district.

Called to graver work at Orvieto, where he painted his gigantic series of frescoes illustrating the coming of Antichrist, the Destruction of the World, the Resurrection, the Last Judgment, and the final state of souls in Paradise and Hell, Signorelli left his work at Monte Oliveto unaccomplished. Seven years later it was taken up by a painter of very different genius. Sodoma was a native of Vercelli, and had received his first training in the Lombard schools, which owed so much to Lionardo da Vinci's influence. He was about thirty years of age when chance brought him to Siena. Here he made acquaintance with Pandolfo Petrucci, who had recently established himself in a species of tyranny over the Republic. The work he did for this patron and other nobles of Siena, brought him into notice. Vasari observes that his hot Lombard colouring, a something florid and attractive in his style, which contrasted with the severity of the Tuscan school, rendered him no less agreeable as an artist than his free manners made him acceptable as a house-friend. Fra Domenico da Leccio, also a Lombard, was at that time General of the monks of Monte Oliveto. On a visit to this compatriot in 1505, Sodoma received a commission to complete the cloister; and during the next two years he worked there, producing in all twenty-five frescoes. For his pains he seemed to have received but little pay—Vasari says, only the expenses of some colour-grinders who assisted him; but from the books of the convent it appears that 241 ducats, or something over 60*l.* of our money, were disbursed to him.

Sodoma was so singular a fellow, even in that age of piquant personalities, that it may be worth while to translate a fragment of Vasari's gossip about him. We must, however,

bear in mind that, for some unknown reason, the Aretine historian bore a rancorous grudge against this Lombard, whose splendid gifts and great achievements he did all he could by writing to depreciate. "He was fond," says Vasari, "of keeping in his house all sorts of strange animals: badgers, squirrels, monkeys, cat-a-mountains, dwarf-donkeys, horses, racers, little Elba ponies, jackdaws, bantams, doves of India, and other creatures of this kind, as many as he could lay his hands on. Over and above these beasts, he had a raven, which had learned so well from him to talk, that it could imitate its master's voice, especially in answering the door when some one knocked, and this it did so cleverly that people took it for Giovannantonio himself, as all the folk of Siena know quite well. In like manner, his other pets were so much at home with him that they never left his house, but played the strangest tricks and maddest pranks imaginable, so that his house was like nothing more than a Noah's Ark." He was a bold rider, it seems; for with one of his racers, ridden by himself, he bore away the prize in that wild horse-race they run upon the Piazza at Siena. For the rest, "he attired himself in pompous clothes, wearing doublets of brocade, cloaks trimmed with gold lace, gorgeous caps, neck-chains, and other vanities of a like description, fit for buffoons and mountebanks." In one of the frescoes of Monte Oliveto, ✓ Sodoma painted his own portrait, with some of his curious pets around him. He there appears as a young man with large and decidedly handsome features, a great shock of dark curled hair escaping from a yellow cap, and flowing down over a rich mantle which drapes his shoulders. If we may trust Vasari, he showed his curious humours freely to the monks. "Nobody could describe the amusement he furnished to those good fathers, who christened him Mattaccio (the big madman), or the insane tricks he played there."

In spite of Vasari's malevolence, the portrait he has given



us of Bazzi has so far nothing unpleasant about it. The man seems to have been a madcap artist, combining with his love for his profession a taste for fine clothes, and what was then perhaps rarer in people of his sort, a great partiality for living creatures of all kinds. The darker shades of Vasari's picture have been purposely omitted from these pages. We only know for certain, about Bazzi's private life, that he was married in 1510 to a certain Beatrice, who bore him two children, and who was still living with him in 1541. The further suggestion that he painted at Monte Oliveto subjects unworthy of a religious house, is wholly disproved by the frescoes which still exist in a state of very tolerable preservation. They represent various episodes in the legend of S. Benedict; all marked by that spirit of simple, almost childish piety which is a special characteristic of Italian religious history. The series forms, in fact, a painted *novella* of monastic life; its petty jealousies, its petty trials, its tribulations and temptations, and its indescribably petty miracles. Bazzi was well fitted for the execution of this task. He had a swift and facile brush, considerable versatility in the treatment of monotonous subjects, and a never-failing sense of humour. His white-cowled monks, some of them with the rosy freshness of boys, some with the handsome brown faces of middle life, others astute and crafty, others again wrinkled with old age, have clearly been copied from real models. He puts them into action without the slightest effort, and surrounds them with landscapes, architecture, and furniture, appropriate to each successive situation. The whole is done with so much grace, such simplicity of composition, and transparency of style, corresponding to the *naïf* and superficial legend, that we feel a perfect harmony between the artist's mind and the motives he was made to handle. In this respect Bazzi's portion of the legend of S. Benedict is more successful than Signorelli's. It was fortunate, perhaps,

that the conditions of his task confined him to uncomplicated groupings, and a scale of colour in which white predominates. For Bazzi, as is shown by subsequent work in the Farnesina Villa at Rome, and in the church of S. Domenico at Siena, was no master of composition ; and the tone, even of his masterpieces, inclines to heat. Unlike Signorelli, Bazzi felt a deep artistic sympathy with female beauty ; and the most attractive fresco in the whole series is that in which the evil monk Florentius brings a bevy of fair damsels to the convent. There is one group, in particular, of six women, so delicately varied in carriage of the head and suggested movement of the body, as to be comparable only to a strain of concerted music. This is perhaps the painter's masterpiece in the rendering of pure beauty, if we except his S. Sebastian of the Uffizzi.

We tire of studying pictures, hardly less than of reading about them ! I was glad enough, after three hours spent among the frescoes of this cloister, to wander forth into the copses which surround the convent. Sunlight was streaming treacherously from flying clouds ; and though it was high noon, the oak-leaves were still a-tremble with dew. Pink cyclamens and yellow amaryllis starred the moist brown earth ; and under the cypress-trees, where alleys had been cut in former time for pious feet, the short firm turf was soft and mossy. Before bidding the hospitable Padre farewell, and starting in our waggonette for Asciano, it was pleasant to meditate awhile in these green solitudes. Generations of white-stoled monks who had sat or knelt upon the now deserted terraces, or had slowly paced the winding paths to Calvaries aloft and points of vantage high above the wood, rose up before me. My mind, still full of Bazzi's frescoes, peopled the wilderness with grave monastic forms, and gracious, young-eyed faces of boyish novices.

## MONTEPULCIANO.

### I.

FOR the sake of intending travellers to this, the lordliest of Tuscan hill-towns, it will be well to state at once and without circumlocution what does not appear upon the time-tables of the line from Empoli to Rome. Montepulciano has a station; but this railway station is at the distance of at least an hour and a half's drive from the mountain upon which the city stands.

The lumbering train which brought us one October evening from Asciano crawled into this station after dark, at the very moment when a storm, which had been gathering from the south-west, burst in deluges of rain and lightning. There was, however, a covered carriage going to the town. Into this we packed ourselves, together with a polite Italian gentleman who, in answer to our questions, consulted his watch, and smilingly replied that a little half-hour would bring us easily to Montepulciano. He was a native of the place. He knew perfectly well that he would be shut up with us in that carriage for two mortal hours of darkness and down-pour. And yet, such is the irresistible impulse in Italians to say something immediately agreeable, he fed us with false hopes and had no fear of consequences. What did it matter to him if we were pulling out our watches and chattering in well-contented undertone about *vino nobile*, *biftek*, and possibly a *pollo arrosto*, or a dish of *tordi*? At the end of the half-hour, as he was well aware, self-congratulations and visions of a hearty supper

would turn to discontented wailings, and the querulous complaining of defrauded appetites. But the end of half an hour was still half an hour off; and we meanwhile were comfortable.

The night was pitchy dark, and blazing flashes of lightning showed a white ascending road at intervals. Rain rushed in torrents, splashing against the carriage wheels, which moved uneasily, as though they could but scarcely stem the river that swept down upon them. Far away above us to the left, was one light on a hill, which never seemed to get any nearer. We could see nothing but a chasm of blackness below us on one side, edged with ghostly olive-trees, and a high bank on the other. Sometimes a star swam out of the drifting clouds; but then the rain hissed down again, and the flashes came in floods of livid light, illuminating the eternal olives and the cypresses which looked like huge black spectres. It seemed almost impossible for the horses to keep their feet, as the mountain road grew ever steeper and the torrent swelled around them. Still they struggled on. The promised half hour had been doubled, trebled, quadrupled, when at last we saw the great brown sombre walls of a city tower above us. Then we entered one of those narrow lofty Tuscan gates, and rolled upon the pavement of a street.

The inn at Montepulciano is called Marzocco, after the Florentine lion which stands upon its column in a little square before the house. The people there are hospitable, and more than once on subsequent occasions have they extended to us kindly welcome. But on this, our first appearance, they had scanty room at their disposal. Seeing us arrive so late, and march into their dining-room, laden with sealskins, water-proofs, and ulsters, one of the party hugging a complete Euripides in Didot's huge edition, they were confounded. At last they conducted the whole company of four into a narrow back bedroom, where they pointed to one fair-sized and one



very little bed. This was the only room at liberty, they said ; and could we not arrange to sleep here? *S'accomodi, Signore! S'accomodi Signora!* These encouraging words, uttered in various tones of cheerful and insinuating politeness to each member of the party in succession, failed to make us comprehend how a gentleman and his wife, with a lean but rather lengthy English friend, and a bulky native of the Grisons, could "accommodate themselves" collectively and undividedly with what was barely sufficient for their just moiety, however much it might afford a night's rest to their worse half. Christian was sent out into the storm to look for supplementary rooms in Montepulciano, which he failed to get. Meanwhile we ordered supper, and had the satisfaction of seeing set upon the board a huge red flask of *vino nobile*. In copious draughts of this the King of Tuscan wines, we drowned our cares ; and when the cloth was drawn, our friend and Christian passed their night upon the supper table. The good folk of the inn had recovered from their surprise, and from the inner recesses of their house had brought forth mattresses and blankets. So the better and larger half of the company enjoyed sound sleep.

It rained itself out at night, and the morning was clear, with the transparent atmosphere of storm-clouds hurrying in broken squadrons from the bad sea quarter. Yet this is just the weather in which Tuscan landscape looks its loveliest. Those immense expanses of grey undulating uplands need the luminousness of watery sunshine, the colour added by cloud-shadows, and the pearly softness of rising vapours, to rob them of a certain awful grimness. The main street of Montepulciano goes straight uphill for a considerable distance between brown palaces ; then mounts by a staircase-zigzag under huge impending masses of masonry ; until it ends in a piazza. On the ascent, at intervals, the eye is fascinated by prospects to the north and east over Val di Chiana, Cortona,



Thrasymene, Chiusi ; to south and west over Monte Cetona, Radicofani, Monte Amiata, the Val d' Ombrone, and the Sienese Contado. Grey walls overgrown with ivy, arcades of time-toned brick, and the forbidding bulk of houses hewn from solid travertine, frame these glimpses of aerial space. The piazza is the top of all things. Here are the Duomo ; the Palazzo del Comune, closely resembling that of Florence, with the Marzocco on its front ; the fountain, between two quaintly sculptured columns ; and the vast palace Del Monte, of heavy Renaissance architecture, said to be the work of Antonio di San Gallo.

We climbed the tower of the Palazzo del Comune, and stood at the altitude of 2000 feet above the sea. The view is finer in its kind than I have elsewhere seen, even in Tuscany, that land of panoramic prospects over memorable tracts of world-historic country. Such landscape cannot be described in words. But the worst is that, even while we gaze, we know that nothing but the faintest memory of our enjoyment will be carried home with us. The atmospheric conditions were perfect that morning. The sun was still young ; the sky sparkled after the night's thunderstorm ; the whole immensity of earth around lay lucid, smiling, newly washed in baths of moisture. Masses of storm-cloud kept rolling from the west, where we seemed to feel the sea behind those intervening hills. But they did not form in heavy blocks or hang upon the mountain summits. They hurried and dispersed and changed and flung their shadows on the world below.

## II.

The charm of this view is composed of so many different elements, so subtly blent, appealing to so many separate sensibilities ; the sense of grandeur, the sense of space, the sense of natural beauty, and the sense of human pathos ; that deep

internal faculty we call historic sense; that it cannot be defined. First comes the immense surrounding space—a space measured in each arc of the circumference by sections of at least fifty miles, limited by points of exquisitely picturesque beauty, including distant cloud-like mountain ranges and crystals of sky-blue Apennines, circumscribing landscapes of refined loveliness in detail, always varied, always marked by objects of peculiar interest where the eye or memory may linger. Next in importance to this immensity of space, so powerfully affecting the imagination by its mere extent, and by the breadth of atmosphere attuning all varieties of form and colour to one harmony beneath illimitable heaven, may be reckoned the episodes of rivers, lakes, hills, cities, with old historic names. For there spreads the lordly length of Thrasymene, islanded and citadelled, in hazy morning mist, still dreaming of the shock of Roman hosts with Carthaginian legions. There is the lake of Chiusi, set like a jewel underneath the copse-clad hills which hide the dust of a dead Tuscan nation. The streams of Arno start far far away, where Arezzo lies enfolded in bare uplands. And there at our feet rolls Tiber's largest affluent, the Chiana. And there is the canal which joins their fountains in the marsh that Lionardo would have drained. Monte Cetona is yonder height which rears its bristling ridge defiantly from neighbouring Chiusi. And there springs Radicofani, the eagle's eyrie of a brigand brood. Next, Monte Amiata stretches the long lines of her antique volcano; the swelling mountain flanks, descending gently from her cloud-capped top, are russet with autumnal oak and chestnut woods. On them our eyes rest lovingly; imagination wanders for a moment through those mossy glades, where cyclamens are growing now, and prim-roses in spring will peep amid anemones from rustling foliage strewn by winter's winds. The heights of Casentino, the Perugian highlands, Volterra, far withdrawn amid a wilderness

of rolling hills, and solemn snow-touched ranges of the Spolentino, Sibyl-haunted fastnesses of Norcia, form the most distant horizon-lines of this unending panorama. And then there are the cities, placed each upon a point of vantage: Siena; olive-mantled Chiusi; Cortona, white upon her spreading throne; poetic Montalcino, lifted aloft against the vaporous sky; San Quirico, nestling in pastoral tranquillity; Pienza, where Æneas Sylvius built palaces and called his birthplace after his own Papal name. Still closer to the town itself of Montepulciano, stretching along the irregular ridge which gave it building ground, and trending out on spurs above deep orchards, come the lovely details of oak-copses, blending with grey tilth and fields rich with olive and vine. The gaze, exhausted with immensity, pierces those deeply cloven valleys, sheltered from wind and open to the sun—undulating folds of brown earth, where Bacchus, when he visited Tuscany, found the grape-juice that pleased him best, and crowned the wine of Montepulciano king. Here from our eyrie we can trace white oxen on the furrows, guided by brown-limbed, white-shirted contadini.

The morning glory of this view from Montepulciano, though irrecoverable by words, abides in the memory, and draws one back by its unique attractiveness. On a subsequent visit to the town in spring time, my wife and I took a twilight walk, just after our arrival, through its gloomy fortress streets, up to the piazza, where the impendent houses lowered like bastions, and all the masses of their mighty architecture stood revealed in shadow and dim lamplight. Far and wide, the country round us gleamed with bonfires; for it was the eve of the Ascension, when every contadino lights a beacon of chestnut logs and straw and piled-up leaves. Each castello on the plain, each village on the hills, each lonely farmhouse at the skirt of forest or the edge of lake, smouldered like a red Cyclopean eye beneath the vault of stars. The flames waxed

and waned, leapt into tongues, or disappeared. As they passed from gloom to brilliancy and died away again, they seemed almost to move. The twilight scene was like that of a vast city, filling the plain and climbing the heights in terraces. Is this custom, I thought, a relic of old Pales-worship?

### III.

The early history of Montepulciano is buried in impenetrable mists of fable. No one can assign a date to the foundation of these high-hill cities. The eminence on which it stands belongs to the volcanic system of Monte Amiata, and must at some time have formed a portion of the crater which threw that mighty mass aloft. But æons have passed since the *gran sasso di Maremma* was a fire-vomiting monster, glaring like Etna in eruption on the Tyrrhene sea; and through those centuries how many races may have camped upon the summit we call Montepulciano! Tradition assigns the first quasi-historical settlement to Lars Porsena, who is said to have made it his summer residence, when the lower and more marshy air of Clusium became oppressive. Certainly it must have been a considerable town in the Etruscan period. Embedded in the walls of palaces may still be seen numerous fragments of sculptured bas-reliefs, the works of that mysterious people. Apropos of Montepulciano's importance in the early years of Roman history, I lighted on a quaint story related by its very jejune annalist, Spinello Benci. It will be remembered that Livy attributes the invasion of the Gauls, who, after besieging Clusium, advanced on Rome, to the persuasions of a certain Aruns. He was an exile from Clusium; and wishing to revenge himself upon his country-people, he allured the Senonian Gauls into his service by the promise of excellent wine, samples of which he had taken with him into Lombardy. Spinello Benci accepts the



legend literally, and continues: "These wines were so pleasing to the palate of the barbarians, that they were induced to quit the rich and teeming valley of the Po, to cross the Apennines, and move in battle array against Chiusi. And it is clear that the wine which Aruns selected for the purpose was the same as that which is produced to this day at Montepulciano. For nowhere else in the Etruscan district can wines of equally generous quality and fiery spirit be found, so adapted for export and capable of such long preservation."

We may smile at the historian's *naïveté*. Yet the fact remains that good wine of Montepulciano can still allure barbarians of this epoch to the spot where it is grown. Of all Italian vintages, with the exception of some rare qualities of Sicily and the Valtellina, it is, in my humble opinion, the best. And when the time comes for Italy to develop the resources of her vineyards upon scientific principles, Montepulciano will drive Brolio from the field and take the same place by the side of Chianti which Volnay occupies by common Macon. It will then be quoted upon wine-lists throughout Europe, and find its place upon the tables of rich epicures in Hyperborean regions, and add its generous warmth to Transatlantic banquets. Even as it is now made, with very little care bestowed on cultivation and none to speak of on selection of the grape, the wine is rich and noble, slightly rough to a sophisticated palate, but clean in quality and powerful and racy. It deserves the enthusiasm attributed by Redi to Bacchus: <sup>1</sup>—

Fill, fill, let us all have our will !  
But with *what*, with *what*, boys, shall we fill ?  
Sweet Ariadne—no, not *that* one—*ah* no ;  
Fill me the manna of Montepulciano :  
Fill me a magnum and reach it me.—Gods !  
How it glides to my heart by the sweetest of roads !

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<sup>1</sup> From Leigh Hunt's Translation.



Oh, how it kisses me, tickles me, bites me !  
 Oh, how my eyes loosen sweetly in tears !  
 I'm ravished ! I'm rapt ! Heaven finds me admissible !  
 Lost in an ecstasy ! blinded ! invisible !—  
 Harken all earth !  
 We, Bacchus, in the might of our great mirth,  
 To all who reverence us, are right thinkers ;  
 Hear, all ye drinkers !  
 Give ear and give faith to the edict divine ;  
 Montepulciano's the King of all wine.

It is necessary, however, that our modern barbarian should travel to Montepulciano itself, and there obtain a flask of *manna* or *vino nobile* from some trusty cellar-master. He will not find it bottled in the inns or restaurants upon his road.

#### IV.

The landscape and the wine of Montepulciano are both well worth the trouble of a visit to this somewhat inaccessible city. Yet more remains to be said about the attractions of the town itself. In the Duomo, which was spoiled by unintelligent rebuilding at a dismal epoch of barren art, are fragments of one of the rarest monuments of Tuscan sculpture. This is the tomb of Bartolommeo Aragazzi. He was a native of Montepulciano, and secretary to Pope Martin V., that *Papa Martino non vale un quattrino*, on whom, during his long residence in Florence, the street-boys made their rhymes. Twelve years before his death he commissioned Donatello and Michelozzo Michelozzi, who about that period were working together upon the monuments of Pope John XXIII. and Cardinal Brancacci, to erect his own tomb at the enormous cost of twenty-four thousand scudi. That thirst for immortality of fame, which inspired the humanists of the Renaissance, prompted Aragazzi to this princely expenditure. Yet, having somehow won the hatred of his fellow-students, he was imme-

diately censured for excessive vanity. Lionardo Bruni makes his monument the theme of a ferocious onslaught. Writing to Poggio Bracciolini, Bruni tells a story how, while travelling through the country of Arezzo, he met a train of oxen dragging heavy waggons piled with marble columns, statues, and all the necessary details of a sumptuous sepulchre. He stopped, and asked what it all meant. Then one of the contractors for this transport, wiping the sweat from his forehead, in utter weariness of the vexatious labour, at the last end of his temper, answered: "May the gods destroy all poets, past, present, and future." I inquired what he had to do with poets, and how they had annoyed him. "Just this," he replied, "that this poet, lately deceased, a fool and windypated fellow, has ordered a monument for himself; and with a view to erecting it, these marbles are being dragged to Montepulciano; but I doubt whether we shall contrive to get them up there. The roads are too bad." "But," cried I, "do you believe *that* man was a poet—that dunce who had no science, nay, nor knowledge either? who only rose above the heads of men by vanity and doltishness?" "I don't know," he answered, "nor did I ever hear tell, while he was alive, about his being called a poet; but his fellow-townsmen now decide he was one; nay, if he had but left a few more money-bags, they'd swear he was a god. Anyhow, but for his having been a poet, I would not have cursed poets in general." Whereupon, the malevolent Bruni withdrew, and composed a scorpion-tailed oration, addressed to his friend Poggio, on the suggested theme of "diuturnity in monuments," and false ambition. Our old friends of humanistic learning—Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar—meet us in these frothy paragraphs. Cambyses, Xerxes, Artaxerxes, Darius, are thrown in to make the gruel of rhetoric "thick and slab." The whole epistle ends in a long-drawn peroration of invective against "that excrement in human shape," who had had the ill-luck, by pretence

to scholarship, by big gains from the Papal treasury, by something in his manners alien from the easy-going customs of the Roman Court, to rouse the rancour of his fellow-humanists.

I have dwelt upon this episode, partly because it illustrates the peculiar thirst for glory in the students of that time, but more especially because it casts a thin clear thread of actual light upon the masterpiece which, having been transported with this difficulty from Donatello's workshop, is now to be seen by all lovers of fine art, in part at least, at Montepulciano. In part at least: the phrase is pathetic. Poor Aragazzi, who thirsted so for "diuturnity in monuments," who had been so cruelly assaulted in the grave by humanistic jealousy, expressing its malevolence with humanistic crudity of satire, was destined after all to be defrauded of his well-paid tomb. The monument, a master work of Donatello and his collaborator, was duly erected. The oxen and the contractors, it appears, had floundered through the mud of Valdichiana, and struggled up the mountain-slopes of Montepulciano. But when the church, which this triumph of art adorned, came to be repaired, the miracle of beauty was dismembered. The sculpture for which Aragazzi spent his thousands of crowns, which Donatello touched with his immortalising chisel, over which the contractors vented their curses and Bruni eased his bile; these marbles are now visible as mere *dissecta membra* in a church which, lacking them, has little to detain a traveller's haste.

On the left hand of the central door, as you enter, Aragazzi lies, in senatorial robes, asleep; his head turned slightly to the right upon the pillow, his hands folded over his breast. Very noble are the draperies, and dignified the deep tranquillity of slumber. Here, we say, is a good man fallen upon sleep, awaiting resurrection. The one commanding theme of Christian sculpture, in an age of Pagan feeling, has been adequately rendered. Bartolommeo Aragazzi, like Ilaria led

Carretto at Lucca, like the canopied doges in S. Zanipolo at Venice, like the Acciaiuoli in the Florentine Certosa, like the Cardinal di Portogallo in Samminiato, is carved for us as he had been in life, but with that life suspended, its fever all smoothed out, its agitations over, its pettinesses dignified by death. This marmoreal repose of the once active man symbolises for our imagination the state into which he passed four centuries ago, but in which, according to the creed, he still abides, reserved for judgment and re-incarnation. The flesh, clad with which he walked our earth, may moulder in the vaults beneath. But it will one day rise again; and art has here presented it imperishable to our gaze. This is how the Christian sculptors, inspired by the majestic calm of classic art, dedicated a Christian to the genius of repose. Among the nations of antiquity this repose of death was eternal; and being unable to conceive of a man's body otherwise than for ever obliterated by the flames of funeral, they were perforce led back to actual life when they would carve his portrait on a tomb. But for Christianity the rest of the grave has ceased to be eternal. Centuries may pass, but in the end it must be broken. Therefore art is justified in showing us the man himself in an imagined state of sleep. Yet this imagined state of sleep is so incalculably long, and by the will of God withdrawn from human prophecy, that the ages sweeping over the dead man before the trumpets of archangels wake him, shall sooner wear away memorial stone than stir his slumber. It is a slumber, too, unterrified, unentertained by dreams. Suspended animation finds no fuller symbolism than the sculptor here presents to us in abstract form.

The boys of Montepulciano have scratched Messer Aragazzi's sleeping figure with *graffiti* at their own free will. Yet they have had no power to erase the poetry of Donatello's mighty style. That, in spite of Bruni's envy, in spite of



injurious time, in spite of the still worse insult of the modernised cathedral and the desecrated monument, embalms him in our memory and secures for him the diuturnity for which he paid his twenty thousand crowns. Money, methinks, beholding him, was rarely better expended on a similar ambition. And ambition of this sort, relying on the genius of such a master to give it wings for perpetuity of time, is, *pace* Lionardo Bruni, not ignoble.

Opposite the figure of Messer Aragazzi are two square bas-reliefs from the same monument, fixed against piers of the nave. One represents Madonna enthroned among worshippers; members, it may be supposed, of Aragazzi's household. Three angelic children, supporting the child Christ upon her lap, complete that pyramidal form of composition which Fra Bartolommeo was afterwards to use with such effect in painting. The other bas-relief shows a group of grave men and youths, clasping hands with loveliest interlacement; the placid sentiment of human fellowship translated into harmonies of sculptured form. Children below run up to touch their knees, and reach out boyish arms to welcome them. Two young men, with half-draped busts and waving hair blown off their foreheads, anticipate the type of adolescence which Andrea del Sarto perfected in his S. John. We might imagine that this masterly panel was intended to represent the arrival of Messer Aragazzi in his home. It is a scene from the domestic life of the dead man, duly subordinated to the recumbent figure, which, when the monument was perfect, would have dominated the whole composition. ✓

Nothing in the range of Donatello's work surpasses these two bas-reliefs for harmonies of line and grouping, for choice of form, for beauty of expression, and for smoothness of surface-working. The marble is of great delicacy, and is wrought to a wax-like surface. At the high altar are three more fragments from the mutilated tomb. One is a long low



frieze of children bearing garlands, which probably formed the base of Aragazzi's monument, and now serves for a predella. The remaining pieces are detached statues of Fortitude and Faith. The former reminds us of Donatello's S. George; the latter is twisted into a strained attitude, full of character, but lacking grace. What the effect of these emblematic figures would have been when harmonised by the architectural proportions of the sepulchre, the repose of Aragazzi on his sarcophagus, the suavity of the two square panels and the rhythmic beauty of the frieze, it is not easy to conjecture. But rudely severed from their surroundings, and exposed in isolation, one at each side of the altar, they leave an impression of awkward discomfort on the memory. A certain hardness, peculiar to the Florentine manner, is felt in them. But this quality may have been intended by the sculptors for the sake of contrast with what is eminently graceful, peaceful, and melodious in the other fragments of the ruined masterpiece.

## V.

At a certain point in the main street, rather more than half way from the Albergo del Marzocco to the piazza, a tablet has been let into the wall upon the left-hand side. This records the fact that here in 1454 was born Angelo Ambrogini, the special glory of Montepulciano, the greatest classical scholar and the greatest Italian poet of the fifteenth century. He is better known in the history of literature as Poliziano, or Politianus, a name he took from his native city, when he came, a marvellous boy, at the age of ten, to Florence, and joined the household of Lorenzo de' Medici. He had already claims upon Lorenzo's hospitality. For his father, Benedetto, by adopting the cause of Piero de' Medici in Montepulciano, had exposed himself to bitter feuds and hatred of his fellow-citizens. To this animosity of party warfare he fell a victim a

few years previously. We only know that he was murdered, and that he left a helpless widow with five children, of whom Angelo was the eldest. The Ambrogini or Cini were a family of some importance in Montepulciano; and their dwelling-house is a palace of considerable size. From its eastern windows the eye can sweep that vast expanse of country, embracing the lakes of Thrasymene and Chiusi, which has been already described. What would have happened, we wonder, if Messer Benedetto, the learned jurist, had not espoused the Medicean cause and embroiled himself with murderous antagonists? Would the little Angelo have grown up in this quiet town, and practised law, and lived and died a citizen of Montepulciano? In that case the lecture-rooms of Florence would never have echoed to the sonorous hexameters of the "Rusticus" and "Ambra." Italian literature would have lacked the "Stanze" and "Orfeo." European scholarship would have been defrauded of the impulse given to it by the "Miscellanea." The study of Roman law would have missed those labours on the Pandects, with which the name of Politian is honourably associated. From the Florentine society of the fifteenth century would have disappeared the commanding central figure of humanism, which now contrasts dramatically with the stern monastic Prior of S. Mark. Benedetto's tragic death gave Poliziano to Italy and to posterity.

## VI.

Those who have a day to spare at Montepulciano can scarcely spend it better than in an excursion to Pienza and San Quirico. Leaving the city by the road which takes a westerly direction, the first object of interest is the Church of San Biagio, placed on a fertile plateau immediately beneath the ancient acropolis. It was erected by Antonio di San Gallo in 1518, and is one of the most perfect specimens

*Pienza*

existing of the sober classical style. The Church consists of a Greek square, continued at the east end into a semicircular tribune, surmounted by a central cupola, and flanked by a detached bell-tower, ending in a pyramidal spire. The whole is built of solid yellow travertine, a material which, by its warmth of colour, is pleasing to the eye, and mitigates the mathematical severity of the design. Upon entering, we feel at once what Alberti called the music of this style ; its large and simple harmonies, depending for effect upon sincerity of plan and justice of balance. The square masses of the main building, the projecting cornices and rounded tribune, meet together and soar up into the cupola ; while the grand but austere proportions of the arches and the piers compose a symphony of perfectly concordant lines. The music is grave and solemn, architecturally expressed in terms of measured space and outlined symmetry. The whole effect is that of one thing pleasant to look upon, agreeably appealing to our sense of unity, charming us by grace and repose ; not stimulative nor suggestive, not multiform nor mysterious. We are reminded of the temples imagined by Francesco Colonna, and figured in his *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. One of these shrines has, we feel, come into actual existence here ; and the religious ceremonies for which it is adapted are not those of the Christian worship. Some more primitive, less spiritual rites, involving less of tragic awe and deep-wrought symbolism, should be here performed. It is better suited for Polifilo's lustration by Venus Physizoe than for the mass on Easter morning. And in this respect, the sentiment of the architecture is exactly faithful to that mood of religious feeling which appeared in Italy under the influences of the classical revival—when the essential doctrines of Christianity were blurred with Pantheism ; when Jehovah became *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* ; and Jesus was the *Heros* of Calvary, and nuns were *Virgines Vestales*. In literature this mood often

strikes us as insincere and artificial. But it admitted of realisation and showed itself to be profoundly felt in architecture.

After leaving Madonna di San Biagio, the road strikes at once into an open country, expanding on the right towards the woody ridge of Monte Fallonica, on the left toward Cetona and Radicofani, with Monte Amiata full in front—its double crest and long volcanic slope recalling Etna; the belt of embrowned forest on its flank, made luminous by sunlight. Far away stretches the Sienese Maremma; Siena dimly visible upon her gentle hill; and still beyond, the pyramid of Volterra, huge and cloud-like, piled against the sky. The road, as is almost invariable in this district, keeps to the highest line of ridges, winding much, and following the dimplings of the earthy hills. Here and there a solitary castello, rusty with old age, and turned into a farm, juts into picturesqueness from some point of vantage on a mound surrounded with green tillage. But soon the dull and intolerable *creta*, ash-grey earth, without a vestige of vegetation, furrowed by rain, and desolately breaking into gullies, swallows up variety and charm. It is difficult to believe that this *creta* of Southern Tuscany, which has all the appearance of barrenness, and is a positive deformity in the landscape, can be really fruitful. Yet we are frequently being told that it only needs assiduous labour to render it enormously productive.

When we reached Pienza we were already in the middle of a country without cultivation, abandoned to the marl. It is a little place, perched upon the ledge of a long sliding hill, which commands the vale of Orcia; Monte Amiata soaring in aerial majesty beyond. Its old name was Cosignano. But it had the honour of giving birth to Æneas Sylvius Piccolomini, who, when he was elected to the Papacy and had assumed the title of Pius II., determined to transform and dignify his native village, and to call it after his own



name. From that time forward Cosignano has been known as Pienza.

Pius II. succeeded effectually in leaving his mark upon the town. And this forms its main interest at the present time. We see in Pienza how the most active-minded and intelligent man of his epoch, the representative genius of Italy in the middle of the fifteenth century, commanding vast wealth and the Pontifical prestige, worked out his whim of city-building. The experiment had to be made upon a small scale; for Pienza was then and was destined to remain a village. Yet here, upon this miniature piazza—in modern as in ancient Italy the meeting-point of civic life, the forum—we find a cathedral, a palace of the bishop, a palace of the feudal lord, and a palace of the commune, arranged upon a well-considered plan, and executed after one design in a consistent style. The religious, municipal, signorial, and ecclesiastical functions of the little town are centralised around the open market-place, on which the common people transacted business and discussed affairs. Pius entrusted the realisation of his scheme to a Florentine architect; whether Bernardo Rossellino, or a certain Bernardo di Lorenzo, is still uncertain. The same artist, working in the flat manner of Florentine domestic architecture, with rusticated basements, rounded windows and bold projecting cornices—the manner which is so nobly illustrated by the Rucellai and Strozzi palaces at Florence—executed also for Pius the monumental Palazzo Piccolomini at Siena. It is a great misfortune for the group of buildings he designed at Pienza, that they are huddled together in close quarters on a square too small for their effect. A want of space is peculiarly injurious to the architecture of this date, 1462, which, itself geometrical and spatial, demands a certain harmony and liberty in its surroundings, a proportion between the room occupied by each building and the masses of the



edifice. The style is severe and prosaic. Those charming episodes and accidents of fancy, in which the Gothic style and the style of the earlier Lombard Renaissance abounded, are wholly wanting to the rigid, mathematical, hard-headed genius of the Florentine quattrocento. Pienza, therefore, disappoints us. Its heavy palace frontispieces shut the spirit up in a tight box. We seem unable to breathe, and lack that element of life and picturesqueness which the splendid retinues of nobles in the age of Pinturicchio might have added to the now forlorn Piazza.

Yet the material is a fine warm travertine, mellowing to dark red, brightening to golden, with some details, especially the tower of the Palazzo Comunale, in red brick. This building, by the way, is imitated in miniature from that of Florence. The cathedral is a small church of three aisles, equally high, ending in what the French would call a *chevet*. Pius had observed this plan of construction somewhere in Austria, and commanded his architect, Bernardo, to observe it in his plan. He was attracted by the facilities for window-lighting which it offered; and what is very singular, he provided by the Bull of his foundation for keeping the walls of the interior free from frescoes and other coloured decorations. The result is that, though the interior effect is pleasing, the church presents a frigid aspect to eyes familiarised with warmth of tone in other buildings of that period. The details of the columns and friezes are classical; and the façade, strictly corresponding to the structure, and very honest in its decorative elements, is also of the earlier Renaissance style. But the vaulting and some of the windows are pointed.

The Palazzo Piccolomini, standing at the right hand of the Duomo, is a vast square edifice. The walls are flat and even, pierced at regular intervals with windows, except upon the south-west side, where the rectangular design is broken by a

noble double Loggiata, gallery rising above gallery—serene curves of arches, grandly proportioned columns, massive balustrades, a spacious corridor, a roomy vaulting—opening out upon the palace garden, and offering fair prospect over the wooded heights of Castiglione and Rocca d'Orcia, up to Radicofani and shadowy Amiata. It was in these double tiers of galleries, in the garden beneath and in the open inner square of the palazzo, that the great life of Italian aristocracy displayed itself. Four centuries ago these spaces, now so desolate in their immensity, echoed to the tread of serving-men, the songs of pages; horse-hooves struck upon the pavement of the court; spurs jingled on the stair-cases; the brocaded trains of ladies sweeping from their chambers rustled on the marbles of the loggia; knights let their hawks fly from the garden-parapets; cardinals and abbreviators gathered round the doors from which the Pope would issue; when he rose from his siesta to take the cool of evening in those airy colonnades. How impossible it is to realise that scene amid this solitude! The palazzo still belongs to the Piccolomini family. But it has fallen into something worse than ruin—the squalor of half-starved existence, shorn of all that justified its grand proportions. Partition-walls have been run up across its halls to meet the requirements of our contracted modern customs. Nothing remains of the original decorations except one carved chimney-piece, an emblazoned shield, and a frescoed portrait of the founder. All movable treasures have been made away with. And yet the carved heraldics of the exterior, the coat of Piccolomini, “*argent, on a cross azure five crescents or,*” the Papal ensigns, keys, and tiara, and the monogram of Pius, prove that this country dwelling of a Pope must once have been rich in details befitting its magnificence. With the exception of the very small portion reserved for the Signori, when they visit Pienza, the palace has become a granary for country produce in a

starveling land. There was one redeeming point about it to my mind. That was the handsome young man, with earnest Tuscan eyes and a wonderfully sweet voice, the servant of the Piccolomini family, who lives here with his crippled father, and who showed us over the apartments.

We left Pienza and drove on to S. Quirico, through the same wrinkled wilderness of marl; wasteful, uncultivated, bare to every wind that blows. A cruel blast was sweeping from the sea, and Monte Amiata darkened with rain clouds. Still the pictures, which formed themselves at intervals, as we wound along these barren ridges, were very fair to look upon, especially one, not far from S. Quirico. It had for foreground a stretch of tilth—olive-trees, honeysuckle hedges, and cypresses. Beyond soared Amiata in all its breadth and blue air-blackness, bearing on its mighty flanks the broken cliffs and tufted woods of Castiglione and the Rocca d'Orcia; eagles' nests emerging from a fertile valley-champaign, into which the eye was led for rest. It so chanced that a band of sunlight, escaping from filmy clouds, touched this picture with silvery greys and soft greens—a suffusion of vaporous radiance, which made it for one moment a Claude landscape.

S. Quirico was keeping *fiesta*. The streets were crowded with healthy handsome men and women from the contado. This village lies on the edge of a great oasis in the Sienese desert—an oasis, formed by the waters of the Orcia and Asso sweeping down to join Ombrone, and stretching on to Montalcino. We put up at the sign of the "Two Hares," where a notable housewife gave us a dinner of all we could desire; *frittata di cervello*, good fish, roast lamb stuffed with rosemary, salad and cheese, with excellent wine and black coffee, at the rate of three *lire* a head.

The attraction of S. Quirico is its gem-like little collegiata, a Lombard church of the ninth century, with carved portals

of the thirteenth. It is built of golden travertine ; some details in brown sandstone. The western and southern portals have pillars resting on the backs of lions. On the western side these pillars are four slender columns, linked by snake-like ligatures. On the southern side they consist of two carved figures—possibly S. John and the Archangel Michael. There is great freedom and beauty in these statues, as also in the lions which support them, recalling the early French and German manner. In addition, one finds the usual Lombard grotesques—two sea-monsters, biting each other ; harpy-birds ; a dragon with a twisted tail ; little men grinning and squatting in adaptation to coigns and angles of the windows. The toothed and chevron patterns of the north are quaintly blent with rude acanthus scrolls and classical egg-mouldings. Over the western porch is a Gothic rose window. Altogether this church must be reckoned one of the most curious specimens of that hybrid architecture, fusing and appropriating different manners, which perplexes the student in Central Italy. It seems strangely out of place in Tuscany. Yet, if what one reads of Toscanella, a village between Viterbo and Orbetello, be true, there exist examples of a similar fantastic Lombard style even lower down.

The interior was most disastrously gutted and “restored” in 1731 : its open wooden roof masked by a false stucco vaulting. A few relics, spared by the eighteenth century Vandals, show that the church was once rich in antique curiosities. A marble knight in armour lies on his back, half hidden by the pulpit stairs. And in the choir are half a dozen rarely beautiful panels of tarsia, executed in a bold style and on a large scale. One design—a man throwing his face back, and singing, while he plays a mandoline ; with long thick hair and fanciful beretta ; behind him a fine line of cypress and other trees—struck me as singularly lovely. In another I noticed a branch of peach, broad leaves and ripe fruit, not only drawn



- with remarkable grace and power, but so modelled as to stand out with the roundness of reality.

The whole drive of three hours back to Montepulciano was one long banquet of inimitable distant views. Next morning, having to take farewell of the place, we climbed to the Castello, or *arx* of the old city! It is a ruined spot, outside the present walls, upon the southern slope, where there is now a farm, and a fair space of short sheep-cropped turf, very green and grassy, and gemmed with little pink geraniums as in England in such places. The walls of the old castle, overgrown with ivy, are broken down to their foundations. This may possibly have been done when Montepulciano was dismantled by the Sienese in 1232. At that date the Commune succumbed to its more powerful neighbours. The half of its inhabitants were murdered, and its fortifications were destroyed. Such episodes are common enough in the history of that internecine struggle for existence between the Italian municipalities, which preceded the more famous strife of Guelfs and Ghibellines. Stretched upon the smooth turf of the Castello, we bade adieu to the divine landscape bathed in light and mountain air—to Thrasymentis and Chiusi and Cetona; to Amiata, Pienza, and S. Quirico; to Montalcino and the mountains of Volterra; to Siena and Cortona; and, closer, to Monte Fallonia, Madonna di Biagio, the house-roofs and the Palazzo tower of Montepulciano.



### FOLGORE DA SAN GEMIGNANO.

STUDENTS of Mr. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's translations from the early Italian poets (*Dante and his Circle*: Ellis and White, 1874) will not fail to have noticed the striking figure made among those jejune imitators of Provençal mannerism by two rhymesters, Cecco Angiolieri and Folgore da San Gemignano. Both belong to the school of Siena, and both detach themselves from the metaphysical fashion of their epoch by clearness of intention and directness of style. The sonnets of both are remarkable for what in the critical jargon of to-day might be termed realism. Cecco is even savage and brutal. He anticipates Villon from afar, and is happily described by Mr. Rossetti as the prodigal or "scamp" of the Dantesque circle. The case is different with Folgore. There is no poet who breathes a fresher air of gentleness. He writes in images, dealing but little with ideas. Every line presents a picture, and each picture has the charm of a miniature fancifully drawn and brightly coloured on a missal-margin. Cecco and Folgore alike have abandoned the mediæval mysticism which sounds unreal on almost all Italian lips but Dante's. True Italians, they are content to live for life's sake, and to take the world as it presents itself to natural senses. But Cecco is perverse and impious. His love has nothing delicate; his hatred is a morbid passion. At his worst or best (for his best writing is his worst feeling) we find him all but rabid. If Caligula, for instance, had written poetry, he might have piqued himself

upon the following sonnet ; only we must do Cecco the justice of remembering that his rage is more than half ironical and humorous :—

An I were fire, I would burn up the world ;  
 An I were wind, with tempest I'd it break ;  
 An I were sea, I'd drown it in a lake ;  
 An I were God, to hell I'd have it hurled ;  
 An I were Pope, I'd see disaster whirled  
 O'er Christendom, deep joy thereof to take ;  
 An I were Emperor, I'd quickly make  
 All heads of all folk from their necks be twirled ;  
 An I were death, I'd to my father go ;  
 An I were life, forthwith from him I'd fly ;  
 And with my mother I'd deal even so ;  
 An I were Cecco, as I am but I,  
 Young girls and pretty for myself I'd hold,  
 But let my neighbours take the plain and old.

Of all this there is no trace in Folgore. The worst a moralist could say of him, is that he sought out for himself a life of pure enjoyment. The famous Sonnets on the Months give particular directions for pastime in a round of pleasure suited to each season. The Sonnets on the Days are conceived in a like hedonistic spirit. But these series are specially addressed to members of the Glad Brigades and Spending Companies, which were common in the great mercantile cities of medieval Italy. Their tone is doubtless due to the occasion of their composition, as compliments to Messer Nicholò di Nisi and Messer Guerra Cavicciuoli.

The mention of these names reminds me that a word need be said about the date of Folgore. Mr. Rossetti does not dispute the commonly assigned date of 1260, and takes for granted that the Messer Nicolò of the Sonnets on the Months was the Sienese gentleman referred to by Dante in a certain passage of the *Inferno* :—<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, xxix. 121.—*Longfellow*.

And to the Poet said I : " Now was ever  
 So vain a people as the Sienese ?  
 Not for a certainty the French by far."  
 Whereat the other leper, who had heard me,  
 Replied unto my speech : " Taking out Stricca,  
 Who knew the art of moderate expenses,  
 And Nicolò, who the luxurious use  
 Of cloves discovered earliest of all  
 Within that garden where such seed takes root.  
 And taking out the band, among whom squandered  
 Caccia d' Ascian his vineyards and vast woods,  
 And where his wit the Abbagliato proffered."

Now Folgore refers in his political sonnets to events of the years 1314 and 1315 ; and the correct reading of a line in his last sonnet on the Months gives the name of Nicholò di Nisi to the leader of Folgore's " blithe and lordly Fellowship." The first of these facts leads us to the conclusion that Folgore flourished in the first quarter of the fourteenth, instead of in the third quarter of the thirteenth century. The second prevents our identifying Nicholò di Nisi with the Niccolò de' Salimbeni, who is thought to have been the founder of the Fellowship of the Carnation. Furthermore, documents have recently been brought to light which mention at San Gemignano, in the years 1305 and 1306, a certain Folgore. There is no sufficient reason to identify this Folgore with the poet ; but the name, to say the least, is so peculiar that its occurrence in the records of so small a town as San Gemignano gives some confirmation to the hypothesis of the poet's later date. Taking these several considerations together, I think we must abandon the old view that Folgore was one of the earliest Tuscan poets, a view which is, moreover, contradicted by his style. Those critics, at any rate, who still believe him to have been a predecessor of Dante's, are forced to reject as spurious the political sonnets referring to Monte Catini and the plunder of Lucca by Ugucione della Faggiuola. Yet these sonnets rest on the same MS. authority

as the Months and Days, and are distinguished by the same qualities.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever may be the date of Folgore, whether we assign his period to the middle of the thirteenth or the beginning of the fourteenth century, there is no doubt but that he presents us with a very lively picture of Italian manners, drawn from the point of view of the high bourgeoisie. It is on this account that I have thought it worth while to translate five of his Sonnets on Knighthood, which form the fragment that remains to us from a series of seventeen. Few poems better illustrate the temper of Italian aristocracy when the civil wars of two centuries had forced the nobles to enroll themselves among the burghers, and when what little chivalry had taken root in Italy was fast decaying in a gorgeous overbloom of luxury. The institutions of feudal knighthood had lost their sterner meaning for our poet. He uses them for the suggestion of delicate allegories fancifully painted. Their mysterious significance is turned to gaiety, their piety to amorous delight, their grimness to refined enjoyment. Still these changes are effected with perfect good taste and in perfect good faith. Something of the perfume of true chivalry still lingered in a society which was fast becoming mercantile and diplomatic. And this perfume is exhaled by the petals of Folgore's song-blossom. He has no conception that to readers of Mort Arthur, or to Founders of the Garter, to Sir Miles Stapleton, Sir Richard Fitz-Simon, or Sir James Audley, his ideal knight would have seemed but little better than a scented civet-cat. Such knights as his were all that Italy possessed, and the poet-painter was justly proud of them, since they served for finished pictures of the beautiful in life.

<sup>1</sup> The above points are fully discussed by Signor Giulio Navone, in his recent edition of *Le Rime di Folgore da San Gemignano e di Cene da la Chitarra d' Arezzo*. Bologna, Romagnoli, 1880. I may further mention that in the sonnet on the Pisans, translated below, which belongs to the political series, Folgore uses his own name.



The Italians were not a feudal race. During the successive reigns of Lombard, Frankish, and German masters, they had passively accepted, stubbornly resisted feudalism, remaining true to the conviction that they themselves were Roman. In Roman memories they sought the traditions which give consistency to national consciousness. And when the Italian communes triumphed finally over Empire, counts, bishops, and rural aristocracy; then Roman law was speedily substituted for the "asinine code" of the barbarians, and Roman civility gave its tone to social customs in the place of Teutonic chivalry. Yet just as the Italians borrowed, modified, and misconceived Gothic architecture, so they took a feudal tincture from the nations of the North with whom they came in contact. Their noble families, those especially who followed the Imperial party, sought the honour of knighthood; and even the free cities arrogated to themselves the right of conferring this distinction by diploma on their burghers. The chivalry thus formed in Italy was a decorative institution. It might be compared to the ornamental frontispiece which masks the structural poverty of such Gothic buildings as the Cathedral of Orvieto.

On the descent of the German Emperor into Lombardy, the great vassals who acknowledged him, made knighthood, among titles of more solid import, the price of their allegiance.<sup>1</sup> Thus the chronicle of the Cortusi for the year 1354 tells us that when Charles IV. "was advancing through the March, and had crossed the Oglio, and was at the borders of Cremona, in his camp upon the snow, he, sitting upon his horse, did knight the doughty and noble man, Francesco da Carrara, who had constantly attended him with a great train, and smiting him upon the neck with his palm, said: 'Be thou a good knight, and loyal to the Empire.' There-

<sup>1</sup> The passages used in the text are chiefly drawn from Muratori's fifty-third Dissertation.



upon the noble German peers dismounted, and forthwith buckled on Francesco's spurs. To them the Lord Francesco gave chargers and horses of the best he had." Immediately afterwards Francesco dubbed several of his own retainers knights. And this was the customary fashion of these Lombard lords. For we read how in the year 1328 Can Grande della Scala, after the capture of Padua, "returned to Verona, and for the further celebration of his victory upon the last day of October held a court, and made thirty-eight knights with his own hand of the divers districts of Lombardy." And in 1294 Azzo d'Este "was knighted by Gerardo da Camino, who then was Lord of Treviso, upon the piazza of Ferrara, before the gate of the Bishop's palace. And on the same day at the same hour the said Lord Marquis Azzo made fifty-two knights with his own hand, namely, the Lord Francesco, his brother, and others of Ferrara, Modena, Bologna, Florence, Padua, and Lombardy; and on this occasion was a great court held in Ferrara." Another chronicle, referring to the same event, says that the whole expenses of the ceremony, including the rich dresses of the new knights, were at the charge of the Marquis. It was customary, when a noble house had risen to great wealth and had abundance of fighting men, to increase its prestige and spread abroad its glory by a wholesale creation of knights. Thus the Chronicle of Rimini records a high court held by Pandolfo Malatesta in the May of 1324, when he and his two sons, with two of his near relatives and certain strangers from Florence, Bologna, and Perugia, received this honour. At Siena, in like manner, in the year 1284, "thirteen of the house of Salimbeni were knighted with great pomp."

It was not on the battle-field that the Italians sought this honour. They regarded knighthood as a part of their signorial parade. Therefore Republics, in whom perhaps, according to strict feudal notions, there was no fount of honour,

presumed to appoint procurators for the special purpose of making knights. Florence, Siena, and Arezzo, after this fashion gave the golden spurs to men who were enrolled in the arts of trade or commerce. The usage was severely criticised by Germans who visited Italy in the Imperial train. Otto Frisingensis, writing the deeds of Frederick Barbarossa, speaks with bitterness thereof: "To the end that they may not lack means of subduing their neighbours, they think it no shame to gird as knights young men of low birth, or even handicraftsmen in despised mechanic arts, the which folk other nations banish like the plague from honourable and liberal pursuits." Such knights, amid the chivalry of Europe, were not held in much esteem; nor is it easy to see what the cities, who had formally excluded nobles from their government, thought to gain by aping institutions which had their true value only in a feudal society. We must suppose that the Italians were not firmly set enough in their own type to resist an enthusiasm which inflamed all Christendom. At the same time they were too Italian to comprehend the spirit of the thing they borrowed. The knights thus made already contained within themselves the germ of those Condottieri, who reduced the service of arms to a commercial speculation. But they lent splendour to the Commonwealth, as may be seen in the grave line of mounted warriors, steel-clad, with open visors, who guard the commune of Siena in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fresco. Giovanni Villani, in a passage of his Chronicle which deals with the fair state of Florence just before the outbreak of the Black and White parties, says the city at that epoch numbered "three hundred Cavalieri di Corredo, with many clubs of knights and squires, who morning and evening went to meat with many men of the court, and gave away on high festivals many robes of vair." It is clear that these citizen knights were leaders of society, and did their duty to the commonwealth by adding to its joyous cheer.

Upon the battle-fields of the civil wars, moreover, they sustained at their expense the charges of the cavalry.

Siena was a city much given to parade and devoted to the Imperial cause, in which the institution of chivalry flourished. Not only did the burghers take knighthood from their procurators, but the more influential sought it by a special dispensation from the Emperor. Thus we hear how Nino Tolomei obtained a Cæsarean diploma of knighthood for his son Giovanni, and published it with great pomp to the people in his palace. This Giovanni, when he afterwards entered religion, took the name of Bernard, and founded the Order of Monte Oliveto.

Owing to the special conditions of Italian chivalry, it followed that the new knight, having won his spurs by no feat of arms upon the battle-field, was bounden to display peculiar magnificence in the ceremonies of his investiture. His honour was held to be less the reward of courage than of liberality. And this feeling is strongly expressed in a curious passage of Matteo Villani's Chronicle. "When the Emperor Charles had received the crown in Rome, as we have said, he turned towards Siena, and on the 19th day of April arrived at that city; and before he entered the same, there met him people of the commonwealth with great festivity upon the hour of vespers; in the which reception eight burghers, given to display but miserly, to the end they might avoid the charges due to knighthood, did cause themselves then and there to be made knights by him. And no sooner had he passed the gates than many ran to meet him without order in their going or provision for the ceremony, and he, being aware of the vain and light impulse of that folk, enjoined upon the Patriarch to knight them in his name. The Patriarch could not withstay from knighting as many as offered themselves; and seeing the thing so cheap, very many took the honour, who before that hour had never thought of being knighted, nor had made provision of what is required from him who seeketh knight-

hood, but with light impulse did cause themselves to be borne upon the arms of those who were around the Patriarch ; and when they were in the path before him, these raised such an one on high, and took his customary cap off, and after he had had the cheek-blow which is used in knighting, put a gold-fringed cap upon his head, and drew him from the press, and so he was a knight. And after this wise were made four-and-thirty on that evening, of the noble and lesser folk. And when the Emperor had been attended to his lodging, night fell, and all returned home ; and the new knights without preparation or expense celebrated their reception into chivalry with their families forthwith. He who reflects with a mind not subject to base avarice upon the coming of a new-crowned Emperor into so famous a city, and bethinks him how so many noble and rich burghers were promoted to the honour of knighthood in their native land, men too by nature fond of pomp, without having made any solemn festival in common or in private to the fame of chivalry, may judge this people little worthy of the distinction they received."

This passage is interesting partly as an instance of Florentine spite against Siena, partly as showing that in Italy great munificence was expected from the carpet-knights who had not won their spurs with toil, and partly as proving how the German Emperors, on their parade expeditions through Italy, debased the institutions they were bound to hold in respect. Enfeebled by the extirpation of the last great German house which really reigned in Italy, the Empire was now no better than a cause of corruption and demoralisation to Italian society. The conduct of a man like Charles disgusted even the most fervent Ghibellines ; and we find Fazio degli Uberti flinging scorn upon his avarice and baseness in such lines as these :—

Sappi ch' i' son Italia che ti parlo,  
Di Lusimburgo *ignominioso* Carlo . . .  
Veggendo te aver tese tue arti



*A tór danari e gir con essi a casa . . .*

Tu dunque, Giove, perche 'l Santo uccello

Da questo Carlo quarto

Imperador non togli e dalle mani

*Degli altri, lurchi moderni Germani*

*Che d' aquila un allocco n' hanno fatto ?*

From a passage in a Sienese chronicle we learn what ceremonies of bravery were usual in that city when the new knights understood their duty. It was the year 1326. Messer Francesco Bandinelli was about to be knighted on the morning of Christmas-day. The friends of his house sent peacocks and pheasants by the dozen, and huge pies of marchpane, and game in quantities. Wine, meat, and bread were distributed to the Franciscan and other convents, and a fair and noble court was opened to all comers. Messer Sozzo, father of the novice, went, attended by his guests, to hear high mass in the cathedral; and there upon the marble pulpit, which the Pisans carved, the ceremony was completed. Tommaso di Nello bore his sword and cap and spurs before him upon horseback. Messer Sozzo girded the sword upon the loins of Messer Francesco, his son aforesaid. Messer Pietro Ridolfi, of Rome, who was the first vicar that came to Siena, and the Duke of Calabria buckled on his right spur. The Captain of the People buckled on his left. The Count Simone da Battifolle then undid his sword and placed it in the hands of Messer Giovanni di Messer Bartolo de' Fibenzi da Rodi, who handed it to Messer Sozzo, the which sword had previously been girded by the father on his son. After this follows a list of the illustrious guests, and an inventory of the presents made to them by Messer Francesco. We find among these "a robe of silken cloth and gold, skirt, and fur, and cap lined with vair, with a silken cord." The description of the many costly dresses is minute; but I find no mention of armour. The singers received golden florins, and the players upon instruments "good store of money." A



certain Salamone was presented with the clothes which the novice doffed before he took the ceremonial bath. The whole catalogue concludes with Messer Francesco's furniture and outfit. This, besides a large wardrobe of rich clothes and furs, contains armour and the trappings for charger and palfrey. The *Corte Bandita*, or open house held upon this occasion, lasted for eight days, and the charges on the Bandinelli estates must have been considerable.

Knights so made were called in Italy *Cavalieri Addobbati*, or *di Corredo*, probably because the expense of costly furniture was borne by them—*addobbo* having become a name for decorative trappings, and *Corredo* for equipment. The latter is still in use for a bride's trousseau. The former has the same Teutonic root as our verb "to dub." But the Italians recognised three other kinds of knights, the *Cavalieri Bagnati*, *Cavalieri di Scudo*, and *Cavalieri d' Arme*. Of the four sorts Sacchetti writes in one of his novels:—"Knights of the Bath are made with the greatest ceremonies, and it behoves them to be bathed and washed of all impurity. Knights of Equipment are those who take the order with a mantle of dark green and the gilded garland. Knights of the Shield are such as are made knights by commonwealths or princes, or go to investiture armed, and with the casque upon their head. Knights of Arms are those who in the opening of a battle, or upon a foughten field, are dubbed knights." These distinctions, however, though concordant with feudal chivalry, were not scrupulously maintained in Italy. Messer Francesco Bandinelli, for example, was certainly a *Cavaliere di Corredo*. Yet he took the bath, as we have seen. Of a truth, the Italians selected those picturesque elements of chivalry which lent themselves to pageant and parade. The sterner intention of the institution, and the symbolic meaning of its various ceremonies, were neglected by them.

In the foregoing passages, which serve as a lengthy preamble

to Folgore's five sonnets, I have endeavoured to draw illustrations from the history of Siena, because Folgore represents Sienese society at the height of medieval culture. In the first of the series he describes the preparation made by the aspirant after knighthood. The noble youth is so bent on doing honour to the order of chivalry, that he raises money by mortgage to furnish forth the banquets and the presents due upon the occasion of his institution. He has made provision also of equipment for himself and all his train. It will be noticed that Folgore dwells only on the fair and joyous aspect of the ceremony. The religious enthusiasm of knighthood has disappeared, and already, in the first decade of the fourteenth century, we find the spirit of Jehan de Saintrè prevalent in Italy. The word *donzello*, derived from the Latin *domicellus*, I have translated *squire*, because the donzel was a youth of gentle birth awaiting knighthood.

This morn a young squire shall be made a knight ;  
 Whereof he fain would be right worthy found,  
 And therefore pledgeth lands and castles round  
 To furnish all that fits a man of might.  
 Meat, bread and wine he gives to many a wight ;  
 Capons and pheasants on his board abound,  
 Where serving men and pages march around ;  
 Choice chambers, torches, and wax candle light.  
 Barbed steeds, a multitude, are in his thought,  
 Mailed men at arms and noble company,  
 Spears, pennants, housing cloths, bells richly wrought.  
 Musicians following with great barony  
 And jesters through the land his state have brought,  
 With dames and damsels whereso rideth he.

The subject having thus been introduced, Folgore treats the ceremonies of investiture by an allegorical method, which is quite consistent with his own preference of images to ideas. Each of the four following sonnets presents a picture to the mind, admirably fitted for artistic handling. We may imagine them to ourselves wrought in arras for a sumptuous chamber.

The first treats of the bath, in which as we have seen already from Sacchetti's note, the aspirant after knighthood puts aside all vice, and consecrates himself anew. Prodezza, or Prowess, must behold him nude from head to foot, in order to assure herself that the neophyte bears no blemish; and this inspection is an allegory of internal wholeness.

Lo Prowess, who despoileth him straightway,  
 And saith : " Friend, now beseems it thee to strip ;  
 For I will see men naked, thigh and hip,  
 And thou my will must know and eke obey ;  
 And leave what was thy wont until this day,  
 And for new toil, new sweat, thy strength equip ;  
 This do, and thou shalt join my fellowship,  
 If of fair deeds thou tire not nor cry nay."  
 And when she sees his comely body bare,  
 Forthwith within her arms she him doth take,  
 And saith : " These limbs thou yieldest to my prayer ;  
 I do accept thee, and this gift thee make,  
 So that thy deeds may shine for ever fair ;  
 My lips shall never more thy praise forsake."

After courage, the next virtue of the knightly character is gentleness or modesty, called by the Italians humility. It is this quality which makes a strong man pleasing to the world, and wins him favour. Folgore's sonnet enables us to understand the motto of the great Borromeo family—*Humilitas*, in Gothic letters underneath the coronet upon their princely palace fronts.

Humility to him doth gently go,  
 And saith : " I would in no wise weary thee ;  
 Yet must I cleanse and wash thee thoroughly,  
 And I will make thee whiter than the snow.  
 Hear what I tell thee in few words, for so  
 Fain am I of thy heart to hold the key ;  
 Now must thou sail henceforward after me ;  
 And I will guide thee as myself do go.  
 But one thing would I have thee straightway leave ;  
 Well knowest thou mine enemy is pride ;  
 Let her no more unto thy spirit cleave :

So leal a friend with thee will I abide  
 That favour from all folk thou shalt receive ;  
 This grace hath he who keepeth on my side."

The novice has now bathed, approved himself to the searching eyes of Prowess, and been accepted by Humility. After the bath, it was customary for him to spend a night in vigil ; and this among the Teutons should have taken place in church, alone before the altar. But the Italian poet, after his custom, gives a suave turn to the severe discipline. His donzel passes the night in bed, attended by Discretion, or the virtue of reflection. She provides fair entertainment for the hours of vigil, and leaves him at the morning with good counsel. It is not for nothing that he seeks knighthood, and it behoves him to be careful of his goings. The three last lines of the sonnet are the gravest of the series, showing that something of true chivalrous feeling survived even among the Cavalieri di Corredo of Tuscany.

Then did Discretion to the squire draw near,  
 And drieth him with a fair cloth and clean,  
 And straightway putteth him the sheets between,  
 Silk, linen, counterpane, and minevere.  
 Think now of this ! Until the day was clear,  
 With songs and music and delight the queen,  
 And with new knights, fair fellows well-beseen,  
 To make him perfect, gave him goodly cheer.  
 Then saith she : " Rise forthwith, for now 'tis due,  
 Thou shouldst be born into the world again ;  
 Keep well the order thou dost take in view."  
 Unfathomable thoughts with him remain  
 Of that great bond he may no more eschew,  
 Nor can he say, " I'll hide me from this chain."

The vigil is over. The mind of the novice is prepared for his new duties. The morning of his reception into chivalry has arrived. It is therefore fitting that grave thoughts should be abandoned ; and, seeing that not only prowess, humility, and discretion are the virtues of a knight, but that he should also



be blithe and debonnair, Gladness comes to raise him from his bed and equip him for the ceremony of institution.

Comes Blithesomeness with mirth and merriment,  
All decked in flowers she seemeth a rose-tree ;  
Of linen, silk, cloth, fur, now beareth she  
To the new knight a rich habiliment ;  
Head-gear and cap and garland flower-besprent,  
So brave they were May-bloom he seemed to be ;  
With such a rout, so many and such glee,  
That the floor shook. Then to her work she went ;  
And stood him on his feet in hose and shoon ;  
And purse and gilded girdle neath the fur  
That drapes his goodly limbs, she buckles on ;  
Then bids the singers and sweet music stir,  
And showeth him to ladies for a boon  
And all who in that following went with her.

At this point the poem is abruptly broken. The MS. from which these sonnets are taken states they are a fragment. Had the remaining twelve been preserved to us, we should probably have possessed a series of pictures in which the procession to church would have been portrayed, the investiture with the sword, the accolade, the buckling on of the spurs, and the concluding sports and banquets. It is very much to be regretted that so interesting, so beautiful, and so unique a monument of Italian chivalry survives thus mutilated. But students of art have to arm themselves continually with patience, repressing the sad thoughts engendered in them by the spectacle of time's unconscious injuries.

It is certain that Folgore would have written at least one sonnet on the quality of courtesy, which in that age, as we have learned from Matteo Villani, identified itself in the Italian mind with liberality. This identification marks a certain degradation of the chivalrous ideal, which is characteristic of Italian manners. One of Folgore's miscellaneous sonnets shows how sorely he felt the disappearance of this quality from the midst of a society bent daily more and more



upon material aims. It reminds us of the lamentable outcries uttered by the later poets of the fourteenth century, Sacchetti, Boccaccio, Uberti, and others of less fame, over the decline of their age.

Courtesy ! Courtesy ! Courtesy ! I call :  
 But from no quarter comes there a reply.  
 They who should show her, hide her ; wherefore I  
 And whoso needs her, ill must us befall.  
 Greed with his hook hath ta'en men one and all,  
 And murdered every grace that dumb doth lie :  
 Whence, if I grieve, I know the reason why ;  
 From you, great men, to God I make my call :  
 For you my mother Courtesy have cast  
 So low beneath your feet she there must bleed ;  
 Your gold remains, but you're not made to last :  
 Of Eve and Adam we are all the seed :  
 Able to give and spend, you hold wealth fast :  
 Ill is the nature that rears such a breed !

Folgore was not only a poet of occasion and compliment, but a political writer, who fully entertained the bitter feeling of the Guelphs against their Ghibelline opponents.

Two of his sonnets addressed to the Guelphs have been translated by Mr. Rossetti. In order to complete the list I have made free versions of two others in which he criticised the weakness of his own friends. The first is addressed, in the insolent impiety of rage, to God :—

I praise thee not, O God, nor give thee glory,  
 Nor yield thee any thanks, nor bow the knee,  
 Nor pay thee service ; for this irketh me  
 More than the souls to stand in purgatory ;  
 Since thou hast made us Guelphs a jest and story  
 Unto the Ghibellines for all to see :  
 And if Uguccio claimed tax of thee,  
 Thou'dst pay it without interrogatory.  
 Ah, well I wot they know thee ! and have stolen  
 St. Martin from thee, Altopascio,  
 St. Michael, and the treasure thou hast lost ;

And thou that rotten rabble so hast swollen  
 That pride now counts for tribute ; even so  
 Thou'st made their heart stone-hard to thine own cost.

About the meaning of some lines in this sonnet I am not clear. But the feeling and the general drift of it are manifest. The second is a satire on the feebleness and effeminacy of the Pisans.

are more silky-sleek than ermines are,  
 Ye Pisan counts, knights, damozels, and squires,  
 Who think by combing out your hair like wires  
 To drive the men of Florence from their car.  
 Ye make the Ghibellines free near and far,  
 Here, there, in cities, castles, buts, and byres,  
 Seeing how gallant in your brave attires,  
 How bold you look, true paladins of war.  
 Stout-hearted are ye as a hare in chase,  
 To meet the sails of Genoa on the sea ;  
 And men of Lucca never saw your face.  
 Dogs with a bone for courtesies are ye :  
 Could Folgore but gain a special grace,  
 He'd have you banded 'gainst all men that be.

Among the sonnets not translated by Mr. Rossetti two by Folgore remain, which may be classified with the not least considerable contributions to Italian gnomie poetry in an age when literature easily assumed a didactic tone. The first has for its subject the importance of discernment and discrimination. It is written on the wisdom of what the ancient Greeks called *Καίριος*, or the right occasion in all human conduct.

Dear friend, not every herb puts forth a flower ;  
 Nor every flower that blossoms fruit doth bear ;  
 Nor hath each spoken word a virtue rare ;  
 Nor every stone in earth its healing power :  
 This thing is good when mellow, that when sour ;  
 One seems to grieve, within doth rest from care ;  
 Not every torch is brave that flaunts in air ;  
 There is what dead doth seem, yet flame doth shower.

Wherefore it ill behoveth a wise man  
 His truss of every grass that grows to bind,  
 Or pile his back with every stone he can,  
 Or counsel from each word to seek to find,  
 Or take his walks abroad with Dick and Dan :  
 Not without cause I'm moved to speak my mind.

The second condemns those men of light impulse who, as Dante put it, discoursing on the same theme, "subject reason to inclination."<sup>1</sup>

What time desire hath o'er the soul such sway  
 That reason finds nor place nor puissance here,  
 Men oft do laugh at what should claim a tear,  
 And over grievous dole are seeming gay.  
 He sure would travel far from sense astray  
 Who should take frigid ice for fire ; and near  
 Unto this plight are those who make glad cheer  
 For what should rather cause their soul dismay.  
 But more at heart might he feel heavy pain  
 Who made his reason subject to mere will,  
 And followed wandering impulse without rein ;  
 Seeing no lordship is so rich as still  
 One's upright self unswerving to sustain,  
 To follow worth, to flee things vain and ill.

The sonnets translated by me in this essay, taken together with those already published by Mr. Rossetti, put the English reader in possession of all that passes for the work of Folgore da San Gemignano.

Since these words were written, England has lost the poet-painter, to complete whose work upon the sonnet-writer of

(1) The line in Dante runs :

"Che la ragion sommettono al talento."

In Folgore's sonnet we read :

"Chi sommette rason a volontade."

On the supposition that Folgore wrote in the second decade of the fourteenth century, it is not impossible that he may have had knowledge of this line from the fifth canto of the *Inferno*.

mediæval Siena I attempted the translations in this essay. One who has trodden the same path as Rossetti, at however a noticeable interval, and has attempted to present in English verse the works of great Italian singers, doing inadequately for Michel Angelo and Campanella what he did supremely well for Dante, may here perhaps be allowed to lay the tribute of reverent recognition at his tomb.

## *SPRING WANDERINGS.*

### ANA-CAPRI.

THE storm-clouds at this season, though it is the bloom of May, are daily piled in sulky or menacing masses over Vesuvius and the Abruzzi, frothing out their curls of moulded mist across the bay, and climbing the heavens with toppling castle towers and domes of alabaster.

We made the most of a tranquil afternoon, where there was an armistice of storm, to climb the bluff of Mount Solaro. A ruined fort caps that limestone bulwark ; and there we lay together, drinking the influences of sea, sun, and wind. Immeasurably deep beneath us plunged the precipices, deep, deep descending to a bay where fisher boats were rocking, diminished to a scale that made the fishermen in them invisible. Low down above the waters wheeled white gulls, and higher up the hawks and ospreys of the cliff sailed out of sunlight into shadow. Immitigable strength is in the moulding of this limestone, and sharp, clear definiteness marks yon clothing of scant brushwood where the fearless goats are browsing. The sublime of sculpturesque in crag structure is here, refined and modulated by the sweetness of sea distances. For the air came pure and yielding to us over the unfooted sea ; and at the basement of those fortress-cliffs the sea was dreaming in its caves ; and far away, to east and south and west, soft light was blent with mist upon the surface of the shimmering waters.

The distinction between prospects viewed from a mountain



overlooking a great plain, or viewed from heights that, like this, dominate the sea, principally lies in this: that while the former only offer cloud shadows cast upon the fields below our feet, in the latter these shadows are diversified with cloud reflections. This gives superiority in qualities of colour, variety of tone, and luminous effect to the sea, compensating in some measure for the lack of those associations which render the outlook over a wide extent of populated land so thrilling. The emergence of towered cities into sunlight at the skirts of moving shadows, the liquid lapse of rivers half disclosed by windings among woods, the upturned mirrors of unruffled lakes, are wanting to the sea. For such episodes the white sails of vessels, with all their wistfulness of going to and fro on the mysterious deep, are but a poor exchange. Yet the sea-lover may justify his preference by appealing to the beauty of empurpled shadows, toned by amethyst or opal, or shining with violet light, reflected from the clouds that cross and find in those dark shields a mirror. There are suggestions, too, of immensity, of liberty, of action, presented by the boundless horizons and the changeful changeless tracts of ocean which no plain possesses.

It was nigh upon sunset when we descended to Ana-Capri. That evening the clouds assembled suddenly. The armistice of storm was broken. They were terribly blue, and the sea grew dark as steel beneath them, till the moment when the sun's lip reached the last edge of the waters. Then a courier of rosy flame sent forth from him passed swift across the gulf, touching, where it trod, the waves with accidental fire. The messenger reached Naples; and in a moment, as by some diabolical illumination, the sinful city kindled into light like glowing charcoal. From Posilippo on the left, along the palaces of the Chiaja, up to S. Elmo on the hill, past Santa Lucia, down on the Marinella, beyond Portici, beyond Torre del Greco, where Vesuvius towered up aloof, an angry mount

of amethystine gloom, the conflagration spread and reached Pompeii, and dwelt on Torte dell' Annunziata. Stationary, lurid, it smouldered while the day died slowly. The long, densely populated sea-line from Pozzuoli to Castellammare burned and smoked with intensest incandescence, sending a glare of fiery mist against the threatening blue behind, and fringing with pomegranate-coloured blots the water where no light now lingered. It is difficult to bend words to the use required. The scene, in spite of natural suavity and grace, had become like Dante's first glimpse of the City of Dis—like Sodom and Gomorrah when fire from heaven descended on their towers before they crumbled into dust. ✓

#### FROM CAPRI TO ISCHIA.

After this, for several days, Libeccio blew harder. No boats could leave or come to Capri. From the piazza parapet we saw the wind scooping the surface of the waves, and flinging spray-fleeces in sheets upon the churning water. As they broke on Cape Campanella, the rollers climbed in foam—how many feet?—and blotted out the olive trees above the headland. The sky was always dark with hanging clouds and masses of low-lying vapour, very moist, but scarcely raining—lightning without thunder in the night.

Such weather is unexpected in the middle month of May, especially when the olives are blackened by December storms, and the orange-trees despoiled of foliage, and the tendrils of the vines yellow with cold. The walnut-trees have shown no sign of making leaves. Only the figs seem to have suffered little.

It had been settled that we should start upon the first sea-faring dawn for Ischia or Sorrento, according as the wind might set; and I was glad when, early one morning, the captain of the *Serena* announced a moderate sirocco. When we reached the little quay we found the surf of the Libeccio

still rolling heavily into the gulf. A gusty south-easter crossed it, tearing spray-crests from the swell as it went plunging onward. The sea was rough enough ; but we made fast sailing, our captain steering with a skill which it was beautiful to watch, his five oarsmen picturesquely grouped beneath the straining sail. The sea slapped and broke from time to time on our windward quarter, drenching the boat with brine ; and now and then her gunwale scooped into the shoulder of a wave as she shot sidling up it. Meanwhile enormous masses of leaden-coloured clouds formed above our heads and on the sea-line ; but these were always shifting in the strife of winds, and the sun shone through them petulantly. As we climbed the rollers, or sank into their trough, the outline of the bay appeared in glimpses, shyly revealed, suddenly withdrawn from sight ; the immobility and majesty of mountains contrasted with the weltering waste of water round us—now blue and garish where the sunlight fell, now shrouded in squally rain-storms, and then again sullen beneath a vaporous canopy. Each of these vignettes was photographed for one brief second on the brain, and swallowed by the hurling drift of billows. The painter's art could but ill have rendered that changeful colour in the sea, passing from tawny cloud-reflections and surfaces of glowing violet to bright blue or impenetrable purple flecked with boiling foam, according as a light-illuminated or a shadowed facet of the moving mass was turned to sight.

Half-way across the gulf the sirocco lulled ; the sail was lowered, and we had to make the rest of the passage by rowing. Under the lee of Ischia we got into comparatively quiet water ; though here the beautiful Italian sea was yellowish green with churned-up sand, like an unripe orange. We passed the castle on its rocky island, with the domed church which has been so often painted in *gouache* pictures through the last two centuries, and soon after noon we came to Casamicciola.

## LA PICCOLLA SENTINELLA.

Casamicciola is a village on the north side of the island, in its centre, where the visitors to the mineral baths of Ischia chiefly congregate. One of its old-established inns is called La Piccola Sentinella. The first sight on entrance is an open gallery, with a pink wall on which bloom magnificent cactuses, sprays of thick-clustering scarlet and magenta flowers. This is a rambling house, built in successive stages against a hill, with terraces and verandahs opening on unexpected gardens to the back and front. Beneath its long irregular façade there spreads a wilderness of orange-trees and honeysuckles and roses, verbenas, geraniums and mignonette, snapdragons, gazenias and stocks, exceeding bright and fragrant, with the green slopes of Monte Epomeo for a background and Vesuvius for far distance. There are wonderful bits of detail in this garden. One dark, thick-foliaged olive, I remember, leaning from the tufa over a lizard-haunted wall, feathered waist-high in huge acanthus-leaves. The whole rich orchard ground of Casamicciola is dominated by Monte Epomeo, the extinct volcano which may be called the *raison d'être* of Ischia; for this island is nothing but a mountain lifted by the energy of fire from the sea-basement. Its fantastic peaks and ridges, sulphur-coloured, dusty grey, and tawny, with brushwood in young leaf upon the cloven flanks, form a singular pendant to the austere but more artistically modelled limestone crags of Capri. No two islands that I know, within so short a space of sea, offer two pictures so different in style and quality of loveliness. The inhabitants are equally distinct in type. Here, in spite of what De Musset wrote somewhat affectedly about the peasant girls—



Ischia ! c'est là qu'on a des yeux,  
C'est là qu'un corsage amoureux  
Serre la hanche.

Sur un bas rouge bien tiré  
Brille, sous le jupon doré,  
La mule blanche—

in spite of these lines I did not find the Ischian women eminent, as those of Capri are, for beauty. But the young men have fine, loose, faun-like figures, and faces that would be strikingly handsome but for too long and prominent noses. They are a singular race, graceful in movement.

Evening is divine in Ischia. From the topmost garden terrace of the inn one looks across the sea toward Terracina, Gaeta, and those descending mountain buttresses, the Phlegræan plains, and the distant snows of the Abruzzi. Rain-washed and luminous, the sunset sky held Hesper trembling in a solid green of beryl. Fireflies flashed among the orange blossoms. Far away in the obscurity of eastern twilight glared the smouldering cone of Vesuvius—a crimson blot upon the darkness—a Cyclops' eye, bloodshot and menacing.

The company in the Piccola Sentinella, young and old, were decrepit, with an odd, rheumatic, shrivelled look upon them. The dining-room reminded me, as certain rooms are apt to do, of a ship's saloon. I felt as though I had got into the cabin of the *Flying Dutchman*, and that all these people had been sitting there at meat a hundred years, through storm and shine, for ever driving onward over immense waves in an enchanted calm.

#### ISCHIA AND FORIO.

One morning we drove along the shore, up hill, and down, by the Porto d'Ischia to the town and castle. This country curiously combines the qualities of Corfu and Catania. The



near distance, so richly cultivated, with the large volcanic slopes of Monte Epomeo rising from the sea, is like Catania. Then, across the gulf, are the bold outlines and snowy peaks of the Abruzzi, recalling Albanian ranges. Here, as in Sicily, the old lava is overgrown with prickly pear and red valerian. *Mesembrianthemums*—I must be pardoned this word; for I cannot omit those fleshy-leaved creepers, with their wealth of gaudy blossoms, shaped like sea anemones, coloured like strawberry and pine-apple cream-ices—*mesembrianthemums*, then, tumble in torrents from the walls, and large-cupped white convolvuluses curl about the hedges. The Castle Rock, with Capri's refined sky-coloured outline relieving its hard profile on the horizon, is one of those exceedingly picturesque objects just too theatrical to be artistic. It seems ready-made for a back scene in *Masaniello*, and cries out to the chromo-lithographer, "Come and make the most of me!" Yet this morning all things, in sea, earth, and sky, were so delicately tinted and bathed in pearly light that it was difficult to be critical.

In the afternoon we took the other side of the island, driving through Lacca to Forio. One gets right round the bulk of Epomeo, and looks up into a weird region called Le Falange, where white lava streams have poured in two broad irregular torrents among broken precipices. Forio itself is placed at the end of a flat headland, boldly thrust into the sea; and its furthest promontory bears a pilgrimage church, intensely white and glaring.

There is something arbitrary in the memories we make of places casually visited, dependent as they are upon our mood at the moment, or on an accidental interweaving of impressions which the *genius loci* blends for us. Of Forio two memories abide with me. The one is of a young woman, with very fair hair, in a light blue dress, standing beside an older woman in a garden. There was a flourishing pomegranate-tree above them. The whiteness and the dreamy

smile of the young woman seemed strangely out of tune with her strong-toned southern surroundings. I could have fancied her a daughter of some moist north-western isle of Scandinavian seas. My other memory is of a lad, brown, handsome, powerfully-featured, thoughtful, lying curled up in the sun upon a sort of ladder in his house-court, profoundly meditating. He had a book in his hand, and his finger still marked the place where he had read. He looked as though a Columbus or a Campanella might emerge from his earnest, fervent, steadfast adolescence. Driving rapidly along, and leaving Forio in all probability for ever, I kept wondering whether those two lives, discerned as though in vision, would meet—whether she was destined to be his evil genius, whether posterity would hear of him and journey to his birthplace in this world-neglected Forio. Such reveries are futile. Yet who entirely resists them?

#### MONTE EPOMEIO.

About three on the morning which divides the month of May into two equal parts I woke and saw the waning moon right opposite my window, stayed in her descent upon the slope of Epomeo. Soon afterwards Christian called me, and we settled to ascend the mountain. Three horses and a stout black donkey, with their inevitable grooms, were ordered; and we took for guide a lovely faun-like boy, goat-faced, goat-footed, with gentle manners and pliant limbs swaying beneath the breath of impulse. He was called Giuseppe.

The way leads past the mineral baths and then strikes uphill, at first through lanes cut deep in the black lava. The trees meet almost overhead. It is like Devonshire, except that one half hopes to see tropical foxgloves with violet bells and downy leaves sprouting among the lush grasses and sweet-scented ferns upon those gloomy, damp, warm walls. After

this we skirted a thicket of arbutus, and came upon the long volcanic ridge, with divinest outlook over Procida and Miseno toward Vesuvius. Then once more we had to dive into brown sandstone gullies, extremely steep, where the horses almost burst their girths in scrambling, and the grooms screamed, exasperating their confusion with encouragements and curses. Straight or bending as a willow wand, Giuseppe kept in front. I could have imagined he had stepped to life from one of Lionardo's fancy-sprighted studies.

After this fashion we gained the spine of mountain which composes Ischia—the smooth ascending ridge that grows up from those eastern waves to what was once the apex of fire-vomiting Inarime, and breaks in precipices westward, a ruin of gulfed lava, tortured by the violence of pent Typhœus. Under a vast umbrella pine we dismounted, rested, and saw Capri. Now the road skirts slanting-wise along the further flank of Epomeo, rising by muddy earth-heaps and sandstone hollows to the quaint pinnacles which build the summit. There is no inconsiderable peril in riding over this broken ground; for the soil crumbles away, and the ravines open downward, treacherously masked with brushwood.

On Epomeo's topmost cone a chapel dedicated to S. Niccolo da Bari, the Italian patron of seamen, has been hollowed from the rock. Attached to it is the dwelling of two hermits, subterranean, with long dark corridors and windows opening on the western seas. Church and hermitage alike are scooped, with slight expenditure of mason's skill, from solid mountain. The windows are but loopholes, leaning from which the town of Forio is seen, 2500 feet below; and the jagged precipices of the menacing Falange toss their contorted horror forth to sea and sky. Through gallery and grotto we wound in twilight under a monk's guidance, and came at length upon the face of the crags above Casamicciola. A few steps upward, cut like a ladder in the stone, brought us to the topmost peak—a

slender spire of soft, yellowish tufa. It reminded me (with differences) of the way one climbs the spire at Strasburg, and stands upon that temple's final crocket, with nothing but a lightning conductor to steady swimming senses. Different indeed are the views unrolled beneath the peak of Epomeo and the pinnacle of Strasburg! Vesuvius, with the broken lines of Procida, Miseno, and Lago Fusaro for foreground; the sculpturesque beauty of Capri, buttressed in everlasting calm upon the waves; the Phlegræan plains and champaign of Volturno, stretching between smooth seas and shadowy hills; the mighty sweep of Naples' bay; all merged in blue; aërial, translucent, exquisitely frail. In this ethereal fabric of azure the most real of realities, the most solid of substances, seem films upon a crystal sphere.

The hermit produced some flasks of amber-coloured wine from his stores in the grotto. These we drank, lying full-length upon the tufa in the morning sunlight. The panorama of sea, sky, and long-drawn lines of coast, breathless, without a ripple or a taint of cloud, spread far and wide around us. Our horses and donkey cropped what little grass, blent with bitter herbage, grew on that barren summit. Their grooms helped us out with the hermit's wine, and turned to sleep face downward. The whole scene was very quiet, islanded in immeasurable air. Then we asked the boy, Giuseppe, whether he could guide us on foot down the cliffs of Monte Epomeo to Casamicciola. This he was willing and able to do; for he told me that he had spent many months each year upon the hill-side, tending goats. When rough weather came, he wrapped himself in a blanket from the snow that falls and melts upon the ledges. In summer time he basked the whole day long, and slept the calm ambrosial nights away. Something of this free life was in the burning eyes, long clustering dark hair, and smooth brown bosom of the faun-like creature. His graceful body had the brusque, unerring movement of the



goats he shepherded. Human thought and emotion seemed a-slumber in this youth who had grown one with nature. As I watched his careless incarnate loveliness I remembered lines from an old Italian poem of romance, describing a dweller of the forest, who

Haunteth the woodland aye 'neath verdurous shade,  
Eateth wild fruit, drinketh of running stream ;  
And such-like is his nature, as 'tis said,  
That ever weepeth he when clear skies gleam,  
Seeing of storms and rain he then hath dread,  
And feareth lest the sun's heat fail for him ;  
But when on high hurl winds and clouds together,  
Full glad is he and waiteth for fair weather.

Giuseppe led us down those curious volcanic *balze*, where the soil is soft as marl, with tints splashed on it of pale green and rose and orange, and a faint scent in it of sulphur. They break away into wild chasms, where rivulets begin ; and here the narrow watercourses made for us plain going. The turf beneath our feet was starred with cyclamens and wavering anemones. At last we reached the chestnut woods, and so by winding paths descended on the village. Giuseppe told me, as we walked, that in a short time he would be obliged to join the army. He contemplated this duty with a dim and undefined dislike. Nor could I, too, help dreading and misliking it for him. The untamed, gentle creature, who knew so little but his goats as yet, whose nights had been passed from childhood *à la belle étoile*, whose limbs had never been cumbered with broadcloth or belt—for him to be shut up in the barrack of some Lombard city, packed in white conscript's sacking, drilled, taught to read and write, and weighted with the knapsack and the musket ! There was something lamentable in the prospect. But such is the burden of man's life, of modern life especially. United Italy demands of her children that by this discipline they should be brought into that harmony which builds a nation out of diverse elements.



## FROM ISCHIA TO NAPLES.

Ischia showed a new aspect on the morning of our departure. A sea-mist passed along the skirts of the island, and rolled in heavy masses round the peaks of Monte Epomeo, slowly condensing into summer clouds, and softening each outline with a pearly haze, through which shone emerald glimpses of young vines and fig-trees.

We left in a boat with four oarsmen for Pozzuoli. For about an hour the breeze carried us well, while Ischia behind grew ever lovelier, soft as velvet, shaped like a gem. The mist had become a great white luminous cloud—not dense and alabastrine, like the clouds of thunder; but filmy, tender, comparable to the atmosphere of Dante's moon. Porpoises and sea-gulls played and fished about our bows, dividing the dark brine in spray. The mountain distances were drowned in bluish vapour—Vesuvius quite invisible. About noon the air grew clearer, and Capri reared her fortalice of sculptured rock, aërially azure, into liquid ether. I know not what effect of atmosphere or light it is that lifts an island from the sea by interposing that thin edge of lustrous white between it and the water. But this phenomenon to-day was perfectly exhibited. Like a mirage on the wilderness, like Fata Morgana's palace ascending from the deep, the pure and noble vision stayed suspense 'twixt heaven and ocean. At the same time the breeze failed, and we rowed slowly between Procida and Capo Miseno—a space in old-world history athrong with Cæsar's navies. When we turned the point, and came in sight of Baiæ, the wind freshened and took us flying into Pozzuoli. The whole of this coast has been spoiled by the recent upheaval of Monte Nuovo with its lava floods and cindery deluges. Nothing remains to justify its fame among the ancient Romans and the Neapolitans of Boccaccio's and

Pontano's age. It is quite wrecked, beyond the power even of hendecasyllables to bring again its breath of beauty :

Mecum si sapies, Gravina, mecum  
 Baias, et placidos coles recessus,  
 Quos ipsæ et veneres colunt, et illa  
 Quæ mentes hominum regit voluptas.  
 Hic vina et choreæ jocique regnant,  
 Regnant et charites facetiæque.  
 Has sedes amor, has colit cupido.  
 His passim juvenes puellulæque  
 Ludunt, et tepidis aquis lavantur,  
 Cœnantque et dapibus leporibusque  
 Miscent delitias venustiores :  
 Miscent gaudia et osculationes,  
 Atque una sociis toris fœventur,  
 Has te ad delitias vocant camœnæ ;  
 Invitat mare, myrteumque littus ;  
 Invitant volucres canoræ, et ipse  
 Gaurus pampineas parat corollas.\*

At Pozzuoli we dined in the Albergo del Ponte di Caligola (Heaven save the mark !), and drank Falernian wine of modern and indifferent vintage. Then Christian hired two open carriages for Naples. He and I sat in the second. In the first we placed the two ladies of our party. They had a large,

\* These verses are extracted from the second book of Pontano's *Hendecasyllabi* (Aldus, 1513, p. 208). They so vividly paint the amusements of a watering-place in the fifteenth century that I have translated them :

With me, let but the mind be wise, Gravina,  
 With me haste to the tranquil haunts of Baiæ,  
 Haunts that pleasure hath made her home, and she who  
 Sways all hearts, the voluptuous Aphrodite.  
 Here wine rules, and the dance, and games and laughter ;  
 Graces reign in a round of mirthful madness ;  
 Love hath built, and desire, a palace here too,  
 Where glad youths and enamoured girls on all sides  
 Play and bathe in the waves in sunny weather,  
 Dine and sup, and the merry mirth of banquets  
 Blend with dearer delights and love's embraces,  
 Blend with pleasures of youth and honeyed kisses,  
 Till, sport-tired, in the couch inarmed they slumber.  
 Thee our Muses invite to these enjoyments ;  
 Thee those billows allure, the myrtled seashore,  
 Birds allure with a song, and mighty Gaurus  
 Twines his redolent wreath of vines and ivy.

fat driver. Just after we had all passed the gate a big fellow rushed up, dragged the corpulent coachman from his box, pulled out a knife, and made a savage thrust at the man's stomach. At the same moment a *guardia-porta*, with drawn cutlass, interposed and struck between the combatants. They were separated. Their respective friends assembled in two jabbering crowds, and the whole party, uttering vociferous objurgations, marched off, as I imagined, to the watch-house. A very shabby lazzarone, without more ado, sprang on the empty box, and we made haste for Naples. Being only anxious to get there, and not at all curious about the squabble which had deprived us of our fat driver, I relapsed into indifference when I found that neither of the men to whose lot we had fallen was desirous of explaining the affair. It was sufficient cause for self-congratulation that no blood had been shed, and that the Procuratore del Rè would not require our evidence.

The Grotta di Posilippo was a sight of wonder, with the afternoon sun slanting on its festoons of creeping plants above the western entrance—the gas lamps, dust, huge carts, oxen, and *contadini* in its subterranean darkness—and then the sudden revelation of the bay and city as we jingled out into the summery air again by Virgil's tomb.

#### NIGHT AT POMPEII.

On to Pompeii in the clear sunset, falling very lightly upon mountains, islands, little ports, and indentations of the bay.

From the railway station we walked above half a mile to the Albergo del Sole under a lucid heaven of aqua-marine colour, with Venus large in it upon the border line between the tints of green and blue.

The Albergo del Sole is worth commemorating. We stepped, without the intervention of courtyard or entrance

hall, straight from the little inn garden into an open, vaulted room. This was divided into two compartments by a stout column supporting round arches. Wooden gates furnished a kind of fence between the atrium and what an old Pompeian would have styled the triclinium. For in the further part a table was laid for supper and lighted with suspended lamps. And here a party of artists and students drank and talked and smoked. A great live peacock, half asleep and winking his eyes, sat perched upon a heavy wardrobe watching them. The outer chamber, where we waited in arm-chairs of ample girth, had its *loggia* windows and doors open to the air. There were singing-birds in cages; and plants of rosemary, iris, and arundo sprang carelessly from holes in the floor. A huge vase filled to overflowing with oranges and lemons, the very symbol of generous prodigality, stood in the midst, and several dogs were lounging round. The outer twilight, blending with the dim sheen of the lamps, softened this pretty scene to picturesqueness. Altogether it was a strange and unexpected place. Much experienced as the nineteenth-century nomad may be in inns, he will rarely receive a more powerful and refreshing impression, entering one at evenfall, than here.

There was no room for us in the inn. We were sent, attended by a boy with a lantern, through fields of dew-drenched barley and folded poppies, to a farmhouse overshadowed by four spreading pines. Exceedingly soft and grey, with rose-tinted veils of steam upon its summit, stood Vesuvius above us in the twilight. Something in the recent impression of the dimly-lighted supper-room, and in the idyllic simplicity of this lantern-litten journey through the barley, suggested, by one of those inexplicable stirrings of association which affect tired senses, a dim, dreamy thought of Palestine and Bible stories. The feeling of the *cenacolo* blent here with feelings of Ruth's cornfields, and the white square houses with their flat



roofs enforced the illusion. Here we slept in the middle of a *contadino* colony. Some of the folk had made way for us; and by the wheezing, coughing, and snoring of several sorts and ages in the chamber next me, I imagine they must have endured considerable crowding. My bed was large enough to have contained a family. Over its head there was a little shrine, hollowed in the thickness of the wall, with several sacred emblems and a shallow vase of holy water. On dressers at each end of the room stood glass shrines, occupied by finely-dressed Madonna dolls and pots of artificial flowers. Above the doors S. Michael and S. Francis, roughly embossed in low relief and boldly painted, gave dignity and grandeur to the walls. These showed some sense for art in the first builders of the house. But the taste of the inhabitants could not be praised. There were countless gaudy prints of saints, and exactly five pictures of the Bambino, very big, and sprawling in a field alone. A crucifix, some old bottles, a gun, old clothes suspended from pegs, pieces of peasant pottery and china, completed the furniture of the apartment.

But what a view it showed when Christian next morning opened the door! From my bed I looked across the red-tiled terrace to the stone pines with their velvet roofage and the blue-peaked hills of Stabiae.

#### SAN GERMANO.

No one need doubt about his quarters in this country town. The Albergo di Pompeii is a truly sumptuous place. Sofas, tables, and chairs in our sitting-room are made of buffalo horns, very cleverly pieced together, but torturing the senses with suggestions of impalement. Sitting or standing, one felt insecure. When would the points run into us? when should we begin to break these incrustations off? and



would the whole fabric crumble at a touch into chaotic heaps of horns?

It is market day, and the costumes in the streets are brilliant. The women wear a white petticoat, a blue skirt made straight and tightly bound above it, a white richly-worked bodice, and the white square-folded napkin of the Abruzzi on their heads. Their jacket is of red or green—pure colour. A rug of striped red, blue, yellow, and black protects the whole dress from the rain. There is a very noble quality of green—sappy and gemmy—like some of Titian's or Giorgione's—in the stuffs they use. Their build and carriage are worthy of goddesses.

Rain falls heavily, persistently. We must ride on donkeys, in waterproofs, to Monte Cassino. Mountain and valley, oak wood and ilex grove, lentisk thicket and winding river-bed, are drowned alike in soft-descending, soaking rain. Far and near the landscape swims in rain, and the hillsides send down torrents through their watercourses.

The monastery is a square, dignified building, of vast extent and princely solidity. It has a fine inner court, with sumptuous staircases of slabbed stone leading to the church. This public portion of the edifice is both impressive and magnificent, without sacrifice of religious severity to parade. We acknowledge a successful compromise between the austerity of the order and the grandeur befitting the fame, wealth, prestige, and power of its parent foundation. The church itself is a tolerable structure of the Renaissance—costly marble incrustations and mosaics, meaningless Neapolitan frescoes. One singular episode in the mediocrity of art adorning it, is the tomb of Pietro dei Medici. Expelled from Florence in 1494, he never returned, but was drowned in the Garigliano. Clement VII. ordered, and Duke Cosimo I. erected, this marble monument—the handicraft, in part at least, of Francesco di San Gallo—to their

relative. It is singularly stiff, ugly, out of place—at once obtrusive and insignificant.

me A gentle old German monk conducted Christian and me over the convent—boy's school, refectory, printing press, lithographic workshop, library, archives. We then returned to the church, from which we passed to visit the most venerable and sacred portion of the monastery. The cell of S. Benedict is being restored and painted in fresco by the Austrian Benedictines; a pious but somewhat frigid process of re-edification. This so-called cell is a many-chambered and very ancient building, with a tower which is now embedded in the massive superstructure of the modern monastery. The German artists adorning it contrive to blend the styles of Giotto, Fra Angelico, Egypt, and Byzance, not without force and a kind of intense frozen pietism. S. Mauro's vision of his master's translation to heaven—the ladder of light issuing between two cypresses, and the angels watching on the tower walls—might even be styled poetical. But the decorative angels on the roof and other places, being adapted from Egyptian art, have a strange, incongruous appearance.

One Monasteries are almost invariably disappointing to one who goes in search of what gives virtue and solidity to human life; and even Monte Cassino was no exception. This ought not to be otherwise, seeing what a peculiar sympathy with the monastic institution is required to make these cloisters comprehensible. The atmosphere of operose indolence, prolonged through centuries and centuries, stifles; nor can antiquity and influence impose upon a mind which resents monkery itself as an essential evil. That Monte Cassino supplied the Church with several potentates is incontestable. That mediæval learning and morality would have suffered more without this brotherhood cannot be doubted. Yet it is difficult to name men of very eminent genius whom the Cassinesi claim as their alumni; nor, with Boccaccio's testimony to their carelessness, and with

the evidence of their library before our eyes, can we rate their services to civilised erudition very highly. I longed to possess the spirit, for one moment, of Montalembert. I longed for what is called historical imagination, for the indiscriminate voracity of those men to whom world-famous sites are in themselves soul-stirring.

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9

## MAY IN UMBRIA.

## FROM ROME TO TERNI.

WE left Rome in clear sunset light. The Alban Hills defined themselves like a cameo of amethyst upon a pale blue distance; and over the Sabine Mountains soared immeasurable moulded domes of alabaster thunderclouds, casting deep shadows, purple and violet, across the slopes of Tivoli. To westward the whole sky was lucid, like some half-transparent topaz, flooded with slowly yellowing sunbeams. The Campagna has often been called a garden of wild-flowers. Just now poppy and aster, gladiolus and thistle, embroider it with patterns infinite and intricate beyond the power of art. They have already mown the hay in part; and the billowy tracts of greyish green, where no flowers are now in bloom, supply a restful groundwork to those brilliant patches of diapered *fioriture*. These are like praying-carpets spread for devotees upon the pavement of a mosque whose roof is heaven. In the level light the scythes of the mowers flash as we move past. From their bronzed foreheads the men toss masses of dark curls. Their muscular flanks and shoulders sway sideways from firm yet pliant reins. On one hill, fronting the sunset, there stands a herd of some thirty huge grey oxen, feeding and raising their heads to look at us, with just a flush of crimson on their horns and dewlaps. This is the scale of Mason's and of Costa's colouring. This is the breadth and magnitude of Rome.

Thus, through dells of ilex and oak, yielding now a glimpse of Tiber and S. Peter's, now opening on a purple section of the distant Sabine Hills, we came to Monte Rotondo. The sun sank ; and from the flames where he had perished, Hesper and the thin moon, very white and keen, grew slowly into sight. Now we follow the Tiber, a swollen, hurrying, turbid river, in which the mellowing Western sky reflects itself. This changeful mirror of swift waters spreads a dazzling foreground to valley, hill, and lustrous heaven. There is orange on the far horizon, and a green ocean above, in which sea-monsters fashioned from the clouds are floating. Yonder swims an elf with luminous hair astride upon a sea-horse, and followed by a dolphin plunging through the fiery waves. The orange deepens into dying red. The green divides into daffodil and beryl. The blue above grows fainter, and the moon and stars shine stronger.

Through these celestial changes we glide into a landscape fit for Francia and the early Umbrian painters. Low hills to right and left ; suavely modelled heights in the far distance ; a very quiet width of plain, with slender trees ascending into the pellucid air ; and down in the mystery of the middle distance a glimpse of heaven-reflecting water. The magic of the moon and stars lends enchantment to this scene. No painting could convey their influences. Sometimes both luminaries tremble, all dispersed and broken, on the swirling river. Sometimes they sleep above the calm cool reaches of a rush-grown mere. And here and there a ruined turret, with a broken window and a tuft of shrubs upon the rifted battlement, gives value to the fading pallor of the West. The last phase in the sunset is a change to blue-grey monochrome, faintly silvered with starlight ; hills, Tiber, fields and woods all floating in aerial twilight. There is no definition of outline now. The daffodil of the horizon has faded into scarcely perceptible pale greenish yellow.



We have passed Stimigliano. Through the mystery of darkness we hurry past the bridges of Augustus and the lights of Narni.

#### THE CASCADES OF TERNI.

The Velino is a river of considerable volume which rises in the highest region of the Abruzzi, threads the upland valley of Rieti, and precipitates itself by an artificial channel over cliffs about seven hundred feet in height into the Nera. The water is densely charged with particles of lime. This calcareous matter not only tends continually to choke its bed, but clothes the precipices over which the torrent thunders with fantastic drapery of stalactite ; and, carried on the wind in foam, incrusts the forests that surround the falls with fine white dust. These famous cascades are undoubtedly the most sublime and beautiful which Europe boasts ; and their situation is worthy of so great a natural wonder. We reach them through a noble mid-Italian landscape, where the mountain forms are austere and boldly modelled, but the vegetation, both wild and cultivated, has something of the South-Italian richness. The hill-sides are a labyrinth of box and arbutus, with coronilla in golden bloom. The turf is starred with cyclamens and orchises. Climbing the staircase paths beside the falls in morning sunlight, or stationed on the points of vantage that command their successive cataracts, we enjoyed a spectacle which might be compared in its effect upon the mind to the impression left by a symphony or a tumultuous lyric. The turbulence and splendour, the swiftness and resonance, the veiling of the scene in smoke of shattered water-masses, the withdrawal of these veils according as the volume of the river slightly shifted in its fall, the rainbows shimmering on the silver spray, the shivering of poplars hung above impendent precipices, the stationary grandeur of the

mountains keeping watch around, the hurry and the incoherence of the cataracts, the immobility of force and changeful changelessness in nature, were all for me the elements of one stupendous poem. It was like an ode of Shelley translated into symbolism, more vivid through inarticulate appeal to primitive emotion than any words could be.

## MONTEFALCO.

The rich land of the Clitumnus is divided into meadows by transparent watercourses, gliding with a glassy current over swaying reeds. Through this we pass, and leave Bevagna to the right, and ascend one of those long gradual roads which climb the hills where all the cities of the Umbrians perch. The view expands, revealing Spello, Assisi, Perugia on its mountain buttress, and the far reaches northward of the Tiber valley. Then Trevi and Spoleto came into sight, and the severe hill-country above Gubbio in part disclosed itself. Over Spoleto the fierce witch-haunted heights of Norcia rose forbidding. This is the kind of panorama that dilates the soul. It is so large, so dignified, so beautiful in tranquil form. The opulent abundance of the plain contrasts with the severity of mountain ranges desolately grand; and the name of each of all those cities thrills the heart with memories.

The main object of a visit to Montefalco is to inspect its many excellent frescoes; painted histories of S. Francis and S. Jerome, by Benozzo Gozzoli; saints, angels, and Scripture episodes by the gentle Tiberio d'Assisi. Full justice had been done to these, when a little boy, seeing us lingering outside the church of S. Chiara, asked whether we should not like to view the body of the saint. This privilege could be purchased at the price of a small fee. It was only necessary to call the guardian of her shrine at the high altar. Indolent, and in compliant mood, with languid curiosity and half-an-hour to

spare, we assented. A handsome young man appeared, who conducted us with decent gravity into a little darkened chamber behind the altar. There he lighted wax tapers, opened sliding doors in what looked like a long coffin, and drew curtains. Before us in the dim light there lay a woman covered with a black nun's dress. Only her hands, and the exquisitely beautiful pale contour of her face (forehead, nose, mouth, and chin, modelled in purest outline, as though the injury of death had never touched her) were visible. Her closed eyes seemed to sleep. She had the perfect peace of Luini's S. Catherine borne by the angels to her grave on Sinai. I have rarely seen anything which surprised and touched me more. The religious earnestness of the young custode, the hushed adoration of the country-folk who had silently assembled round us, intensified the sympathy-inspiring beauty of the slumbering girl. Could Julia, daughter of Claudius, have been fairer than this maiden, when the Lombard workmen found her in her Latin tomb, and brought her to be worshipped on the Capitol? S. Chiara's shrine was hung round with her relics; and among these the heart extracted from her body was suspended. Upon it, apparently wrought into the very substance of the mummied flesh, were impressed a figure of the crucified Christ, the scourge, and the five stigmata. The guardian's faith in this miraculous witness to her sainthood, the gentle piety of the men and women who knelt before it, checked all expressions of incredulity. We abandoned ourselves to the genius of the place; forgot even to ask what Santa Chiara was sleeping here; and withdrew, toned to a not unpleasing melancholy. The world-famous Saint Clair, the spiritual sister of S. Francis, lies in Assisi. I have often asked myself, Who, then, was this nun? What history had she? And I think now of this girl as of a damsel of romance, a Sleeping Beauty in the wood of time, secluded from intrusive elements of fact, and folded in the love and faith of her own simple worshippers. Among the hollows of

Arcadia, how many rustic shrines in ancient days held saints of Hellas, apocryphal, perhaps, like this, but hallowed by tradition and enduring homage !\*

## FOLIGNO.

In the landscape of Raphael's votive picture, known as the *Madonna di Foligno*, there is a town with a few towers, placed upon a broad plain at the edge of some blue hills. Allowing for that license as to details which imaginative masters permitted themselves in matters of subordinate importance, Raphael's sketch is still true to Foligno. The place has not materially changed since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Indeed, relatively to the state of Italy at large, it is still the same as in the days of ancient Rome. Foligno forms a station of commanding interest between Rome and the Adriatic upon the great Flaminian Way. At Foligno the passes of the Apennines debouch into the Umbrian plain, which slopes gradually toward the valley of the Tiber, and from it the valley of the Nera is reached by an easy ascent beneath the walls of Spoleto. An army advancing from the north by the Metaurus and the Furlo Pass must find itself at Foligno; and the level champaign round the city is well adapted to the maintenance and exercises of a garrison. In the days of the Republic and the Empire, the value of this position was well understood; but Foligno's importance, as the key to the Flaminian Way, was eclipsed by two flourishing cities in its immediate vicinity, *Hispellum* and *Mevania*, the modern *Spello* and *Bevagna*. We might hazard a conjecture that the Lombards, when they ruled the

\* There is in reality no doubt or problem about this Saint Clair. She was born in 1275, and joined the Augustinian Sisterhood, dying young, in 1308, as Abbess of her convent. Continual and impassioned meditation on the Passion of our Lord impressed her heart with the signs of His suffering which have been described above. I owe this note to the kindness of an anonymous correspondent, whom I here thank.



Duchy of Spoleto, following their usual policy of opposing new military centres to the ancient Roman municipia, encouraged Fulginium at the expense of her two neighbours. But of this there is no certainty to build upon. All that can be affirmed with accuracy is that in the Middle Ages, while Spello and Bevagna declined into the inferiority of dependent burghs, Foligno grew in power and became the chief commune of this part of Umbria. It was famous during the last centuries of struggle between the Italian burghers and their native despots, for peculiar ferocity in civil strife. Some of the bloodiest pages in mediæval Italian history are those which relate the vicissitudes of the Trinci family, the exhaustion of Foligno by internal discord, and its final submission to the Papal power. Since railways have been carried from Rome through Narni and Spoleto to Ancona and Perugia, Foligno has gained considerably in commercial and military status. It is the point of intersection for three lines; the Italian government has made it a great cavalry dépôt, and there are signs of reviving traffic in its decayed streets. Whether the presence of a large garrison has already modified the population, or whether we may ascribe something to the absence of Roman municipal institutions in the far past, and to the savagery of the mediæval period, it is difficult to say. Yet the impression left by Foligno upon the mind is different from that of Assisi, Spello, and Montefalco, which are distinguished for a certain grace and gentleness in their inhabitants.

My window in the city wall looks southward across the plain to Spoleto, with Montefalco perched aloft upon the right, and Trevi on its mountain-bracket to the left. From the topmost peaks of the Sabine Apennines, gradual tender sloping lines descend to find their quiet in the valley of Clitumnus. The space between me and that distance is infinitely rich with every sort of greenery, dotted here and there with towers and relics of baronial houses. The little town is in commotion; for the



working-men of Foligno and its neighbourhood have resolved to spend their earnings on a splendid festa—horse-races, and two nights of fireworks. The acacias and pawlonias on the ramparts are in full bloom of creamy white and lilac. In the glare of Bengal lights these trees, with all their pendulous blossoms, surpassed the most fantastic of artificial decorations. The rockets sent aloft into the sky amid that solemn Umbrian landscape were nowise out of harmony with nature. I never sympathised with critics who resent the intrusion of fireworks upon scenes of natural beauty. The Giessbach, lighted up at so much per head on stated evenings, with a band playing and a crowd of cockneys staring, presents perhaps an incongruous spectacle. But where, as here at Foligno, a whole city has made itself a festival, where there are multitudes of citizens and soldiers and country-people slowly moving and gravely admiring, with the decency and order characteristic of an Italian crowd, I have nothing but a sense of satisfaction.

It is sometimes the traveller's good fortune in some remote place to meet with an inhabitant who incarnates and interprets for him the *genius loci* as he has conceived it. Though his own subjectivity will assuredly play a considerable part in such an encounter, transferring to his chance acquaintance qualities he may not possess, and connecting this personality in some purely imaginative manner with thoughts derived from study, or impressions made by nature; yet the stranger will henceforth become the meeting-point of many memories, the central figure in a composition which derives from him its vividness. Unconsciously and innocently he has lent himself to the creation of a picture, and round him, as around the hero of a myth, have gathered thoughts and sentiments of which he had himself no knowledge. On one of these nights I had been threading the aisles of acacia-trees, now glaring red, now azure, as the Bengal lights kept changing. My mind instinctively went back to scenes of treachery and bloodshed

in the olden time, when Corrado Trinci paraded the mangled remnants of three hundred of his victims, heaped on mule-back, through Foligno, for a warning to the citizens. As the procession moved along the ramparts, I found myself in contact with a young man, who readily fell into conversation. He was very tall, with enormous breadth of shoulders, and long sinewy arms, like Michelangelo's favourite models. His head was small, curled over with crisp black hair. Low forehead, and thick level eyebrows absolutely meeting over intensely bright fierce eyes. The nose descending straight from the brows, as in a statue of Hadrian's age. The mouth full-lipped, petulant, and passionate above a firm round chin. He was dressed in the shirt, white trousers, and loose white jacket of a contadino; but he did not move with a peasant's slouch, rather with the elasticity and alertness of an untamed panther. He told me that he was just about to join a cavalry regiment; and I could well imagine, when military dignity was added to that gait, how grandly he would go. This young man, of whom I heard nothing more after our half-hour's conversation among the crackling fireworks and roaring cannon, left upon my mind an indescribable impression of dangerousness—of "something fierce and terrible, eligible to burst forth." Of men like this, then, were formed the Companies of Adventure who flooded Italy with villany, ambition, and lawlessness in the fifteenth century. Gattamelata, who began life as a baker's boy at Narni and ended it with a bronze statue by Donatello on the public square in Padua, was of this breed. Like this were the Trinci and their bands of murderers. Like this were the bravi who hunted Lorenzaccio to death at Venice. Like this was Pietro Paolo Baglioni, whose fault, in the eyes of Machiavelli, was that he could not succeed in being "*perfettamente tristo*." Beautiful, but inhuman; passionate, but cold; powerful, but rendered impotent for firm and lofty deeds by immorality and treason;

how many centuries of men like this once wasted Italy and plunged her into servitude ! Yet what material is here, under sterner discipline, and with a nobler national ideal, for the formation of heroic armies. Of such stuff, doubtless, were the Roman legionaries. When will the Italians learn to use these men as Fabius or as Cæsar, not as the Vitelli and the Trinci used them ? In such meditations, deeply stirred by the meeting of my own reflections with one who seemed to represent for me in life and blood the spirit of the place which had provoked them, I said farewell to Cavallucci, and returned to my bed-room on the city-wall. The last rockets had whizzed and the last cannons had thundered ere I fell asleep.

## SPELLO.

Spello contains some not inconsiderable antiquities—the remains of a Roman theatre, a Roman gate with the heads of two men and a woman leaning over it, and some fragments of Roman sculpture scattered through its buildings. The churches, especially those of S. M. Maggiore and S. Francesco, are worth a visit for the sake of Pinturicchio. Nowhere, except in the Piccolomini Library at Siena, can that master's work in fresco be better studied than here. The satisfaction with which he executed the wall paintings in S. Maria Maggiore is testified by his own portrait introduced upon a panel in the decoration of the Virgin's chamber. The scrupulously rendered details of books, chairs, window seats, &c., which he here has copied, remind one of Carpaccio's study of S. Benedict at Venice. It is all sweet, tender, delicate, and carefully finished ; but without depth, not even the depth of Perugino's feeling. In S. Francesco, Pinturicchio, with the same meticulous refinement, painted a letter addressed to him by Gentile Baglioni. It lies on a stool before Madonna

and her court of saints. Nicety of execution, technical mastery of fresco as a medium for Dutch detail-painting, prettiness of composition, and cheerfulness of colouring, are noticeable throughout his work here rather than either thought or sentiment. S. Maria Maggiore can boast a fresco of Madonna between a young episcopal saint and Catherine of Alexandria from the hand of Perugino. The rich yellow harmony of its tones, and the graceful dignity of its emotion, conveyed no less by a certain Raphaelesque pose and outline than by suavity of facial expression, enable us to measure the distance between this painter and his quasi-pupil Pinturicchio.

We did not, however, drive to Spello to inspect either Roman antiquities or frescoes, but to see an inscription on the city walls about Orlando. It is a rude Latin elegiac couplet, saying that, "from the sign below, men may conjecture the mighty members of Roland, nephew of Charles; his deeds are written in history." Three agreeable old gentlemen of Spello, who attended us with much politeness, and were greatly interested in my researches, pointed out a mark waist-high upon the wall, where Orlando's knee is reported to have reached. But I could not learn anything about a phallic monolith, which is said by Guérin or Panizzi to have been identified with the Roland myth at Spello. Such a column either never existed here, or had been removed before the memory of the present generation.

#### EASTER MORNING AT ASSISI.

We are in the lower church of S. Francesco. High mass is being sung, with orchestra and organ and a choir of many voices. Candles are lighted on the altar, over-canopied with Giotto's allegories. From the low southern windows slants the sun, in narrow bands, upon the many-coloured gloom and embrowned glory of these painted aisles. Women in bright



kerchiefs kneel upon the stones, and shaggy men from the mountains stand or lean against the wooden benches. There is no moving from point to point. Where we have taken our station, at the north-western angle of the transept, there we stay till mass be over. The whole low-vaulted building glows duskily; the frescoed roof, the stained windows, the figure-crowded pavements blending their rich but subdued colours, like hues upon some marvellous moth's wings, or like a deep-toned rainbow mist discerned in twilight dreams, or like such tapestry as Eastern queens, in ancient days, wrought for the pavilion of an empress. Forth from this maze of mingling tints, indefinite in shade and sunbeams, lean earnest, saintly faces—ineffably pure—adoring, pitying, pleading; raising their eyes in ecstasy to heaven, or turning them in ruth toward earth. Men and women of whom the world was not worthy—at the hands of those old painters they have received the divine grace, the dove-like simplicity, whereof Italians in the fourteenth century possessed the irrecoverable secret. Each face is a poem; the counterpart in painting to a chapter from the *Fioretti di San Francesco*. Over the whole scene—in the architecture, in the frescoes, in the coloured windows, in the gloom, on the people, in the incense, from the chiming bells, through the music—broods one spirit: the spirit of him who was “the co-espoused, co-transfornate with Christ;” the ardent, the radiant, the beautiful in soul; the suffering, the strong, the simple, the victorious over self and sin; the celestial who trampled upon earth and rose on wings of ecstasy to heaven; the Christ-inebriated saint of visions super-sensual and life beyond the grave. Far down below the feet of those who worship God through him, S. Francis sleeps; but his soul, the incorruptible part of him, the message he gave the world, is in the spaces round us. This is his temple. He fills it like an unseen god. Not as Phœbus or Athene, from their marble pedestals; but as an abiding spirit, felt every-



where, nowhere seized, absorbing in itself all mysteries, all myths, all burning exaltations, all abasements, all love, self-sacrifice, pain, yearning, which the thought of Christ, sweeping the centuries, hath wrought for men. Let, therefore, choir and congregation raise their voices on the tide of prayers and praises; for this is Easter morning—Christ is risen! Our sister, Death of the Body, for whom S. Francis thanked God in his hymn, is reconciled to us this day, and takes us by the hand, and leads us to the gate whence floods of heavenly glory issue from the faces of a multitude of saints. Pray, ye poor people; chant and pray. If all be but a dream, to wake from this were loss for you indeed!

#### PERUSIA AUGUSTA.

The piazza in front of the Prefettura is my favourite resort on these nights of full moon. The evening twilight is made up partly of sunset fading over Thrasymene and Tuscany; partly of moonrise from the mountains of Gubbio and the passes toward Ancona. The hills are capped with snow, although the season is so forward. Below our parapets the bulk of S. Domenico, with its gaunt, perforated tower, and the finer group of S. Pietro, flaunting the arrowy "Pennacchio di Perugia," jut out upon the spine of hill which dominates the valley of the Tiber. As the night gloom deepens, and the moon ascends the sky, these buildings seem to form the sombre foreground to some French etching. Beyond them spreads the misty moon-irradiated plain of Umbria. Over all rise shadowy Apennines, with dim suggestions of Assisi, Spello, Foligno, Montefalco, and Spoleto on their basements. Little thin whiffs of breezes, very slight and searching, flit across, and shiver as they pass from Apennine to plain. The slowly moving population—women in veils, men winter-mantled—pass to and fro between the buildings and the grey immensity

of sky. Bells ring. The bugles of the soldiers blow retreat in convents turned to barracks. Young men roam the streets beneath, singing May songs. Far, far away upon the plain, red through the vitreous moonlight ringed with thundery gauze, fires of unnamed castelli smoulder. As we lean from ledges eighty feet in height, gas vies with moon in chequering illuminations on the ancient walls; Etruscan mouldings, Roman letters, high-piled hovels, suburban world-old dwellings plastered like martins' nests against the masonry.

Sunlight adds more of detail to this scene. To the right of Subasio, where the passes go from Foligno towards Urbino and Ancona, heavy masses of thunder-cloud hang every day; but the plain and hill-buttresses are clear in transparent blueness. First comes Assisi, with S. M. degli Angeli below; then Spello; then Foligno; then Trevi; and, far away, Spoleto; with, reared against those misty battlements, the village height of Montefalco—the “*ringhiera dell' Umbria*,” as they call it in this country. By daylight, the snow on yonder peaks is clearly visible, where the Monti della Sibilla tower up above the sources of the Nera and Velino from frigid wastes of Norcia. The lower ranges seem as though painted, in films of airiest and palest azure, upon china; and then comes the broad, green champaign, flecked with villages and farms. Just at the basement of Perugia winds Tiber, through tallows and grey poplar-trees, spanned by ancient arches of red brick, and guarded here and there by castellated towers. The mills beneath their dams and weirs are just as Raphael drew them; and the feeling of air and space reminds one, on each coign of vantage, of some Umbrian picture. Every hedgerow is hoary with May-bloom and honeysuckle. The oaks hang out their golden-dusted tassels. Wayside shrines are decked with laburnum boughs and iris blossoms plucked from the copse-woods, where spires of purple and pink orchis variegated the thin, fine grass. The land waves far and wide with young corn, emerald

green beneath the olive-trees, which take upon their under-foliage tints reflected from this verdure or red tones from the naked earth. A fine race of *contadini*, with large, heroically-graceful forms, and beautiful dark eyes and noble faces, move about this garden, intent on ancient, easy tillage of the kind Saturnian soil.

#### LA MAGIONE.

On the road from Perugia to Cortona, the first stage ends at La Magione, a high hill-village commanding the passage from the Umbrian champaign to the lake of Thrasymene. It has a grim square fortalice above it, now in ruins, and a stately castle to the south-east, built about the time of Braccio. Here took place that famous diet of Cesare Borgia's enemies, when the son of Alexander VI. was threatening Bologna with his arms, and bidding fair to make himself supreme tyrant of Italy in 1502. It was the policy of Cesare to fortify himself by reducing the fiefs of the Church to submission, and by rooting out the dynasties which had acquired a sort of tyranny in Papal cities. The Varani of Camerino and the Manfredi of Faenza had been already extirpated. There was only too good reason to believe that the turn of the Vitelli at Città di Castello, of the Baglioni at Perugia, and of the Bentivogli at Bologna would come next. Pandolfo Petrucci at Siena, surrounded on all sides by Cesare's conquests, and specially menaced by the fortification of Piombino, felt himself in danger. The great house of the Orsini, who swayed a large part of the Patrimony of S. Peter's, and were closely allied to the Vitelli, had even graver cause for anxiety. But such was the system of Italian warfare, that nearly all these noble families lived by the profession of arms, and most of them were in the pay of Cesare. When, therefore, the conspirators met at La Magione, they were plotting against a man whose money they had taken, and

whom they had hitherto aided in his career of fraud and spoliation.

The diet consisted of the Cardinal Orsini, an avowed antagonist of Alexander VI. ; his brother Paolo, the chieftain of the clan ; Vitellozzo Vitelli, lord of Città di Castello ; Gian-Paolo Baglioni, made undisputed master of Perugia by the recent failure of his cousin Grifonetto's treason ; Oliverotto, who had just acquired the March of Fermo by the murder of his uncle Giovanni da Fogliani ; Ermes Bentivoglio, the heir of Bologna ; and Antonio da Venafro, the secretary of Pandolfo Petrucci. These men vowed hostility on the basis of common injuries and common fear against the Borgia. But they were for the most part stained themselves with crime, and dared not trust each other, and could not gain the confidence of any respectable power in Italy except the exiled Duke of Urbino. Procrastination was the first weapon used by the wily Cesare, who trusted that time would sow among his rebel captains suspicion and dissension. He next made overtures to the leaders separately, and so far succeeded in his perfidious policy as to draw Vitellozzo Vitelli, Oliverotto da Fermo, Paolo Orsini, and Francesco Orsini, Duke of Gravina, into his nets at Sinigaglia. Under pretext of fair conference and equitable settlement of disputed claims, he possessed himself of their persons, and had them strangled—two upon December 31, and two upon January 18, 1503. Of all Cesare's actions, this was the most splendid for its successful combination of sagacity and policy in the hour of peril, of persuasive diplomacy, and of ruthless decision when the time to strike his blow arrived.

#### CORTONA.

After leaving La Magione, the road descends upon the Lake of Thrasymentum through oak-woods full of nightingales.



The Lake lay basking, leaden-coloured, smooth and waveless, under a misty, rain-charged, sun-irradiated sky. At Passignano, close beside its shore, we stopped for mid-day. This is a little fishing village of very poor people, who live entirely by labour on the waters. They showed us huge eels coiled in tanks, and some fine specimens of the silver carp—*Reina del Lago*. It was off one of the eels that we made our lunch; and taken, as he was, alive from his cool lodging, he furnished a series of dishes fit for a king.

Climbing the hill of Cortona seemed a quite interminable business. It poured a deluge. Our horses were tired, and one lean donkey, who, after much trouble, was produced from a farmhouse and yoked in front of them, rendered but little assistance.

Next day we duly saw the Muse and Lamp in the Museo, the Fra Angelicos, and all the Signorellis. One cannot help thinking that too much fuss is made nowadays about works of art—running after them for their own sakes, exaggerating their importance, and detaching them as objects of study, instead of taking them with sympathy and carelessness as pleasant or instructive adjuncts to our actual life. Artists, historians of art, and critics are forced to isolate pictures; and it is of profit to their souls to do so. But simple folk, who have no æsthetic vocation, whether creative or critical, suffer more than is good for them by compliance with mere fashion. Sooner or later we shall return to the spirit of the ages which produced these pictures, and which regarded them with less of an industrious bewilderment than they evoke at present.

I am far indeed from wishing to decry art, the study of art, or the benefits to be derived from its intelligent enjoyment. I only mean to suggest that we go the wrong way to work at present in this matter. Picture and sculpture galleries accustom us to the separation of art from life. Our methods of studying art, making a beginning of art-study while travel-



ling, tend to perpetuate this separation. It is only on reflection, after long experience, that we come to perceive that the most fruitful moments in our art education have been casual and unsought, in quaint nooks and unexpected places, where nature, art, and life are happily blent. ✓

The Palace of the Commune at Cortona is interesting because of the shields of Florentine governors, sculptured on blocks of grey stone, and inserted in its outer walls—Peruzzi, Albizzi, Strozzi, Salviati, among the more ancient—de' Medici at a later epoch. The revolutions in the Republic of Florence may be read by a herald from these coats of arms and the dates beneath them. arms

The landscape of this Tuscan highland satisfies me more and more with sense of breadth and beauty. From S. Margherita above the town the prospect is immense and wonderful and wild—up into those brown, forbidding mountains; down to the vast plain; and over to the cities of Chiusi, Montepulciano, and Foiano. The jewel of the view is Trasimeno, a silvery shield encased with serried hills, and set upon one corner of the scene, like a precious thing apart and meant for separate contemplation. There is something in the singularity and circumscribed completeness of the mountain-girded lake, diminished by distance, which would have attracted Lionardo da Vinci's pencil, had he seen it.

Cortona seems desperately poor, and the beggars are intolerable. One little blind boy, led by his brother, both frightfully ugly and ragged urchins, pursued us all over the city, incessantly whining "Signore! Padrone!" It was only on the threshold of the inn that I ventured to give them a few coppers, for I knew well that any public beneficence would raise the whole swarm of the begging population round us. Sitting later in the day upon the piazza of S. Domenico, I saw the same blind boy taken by his brother to play. The game consisted in the little creature throwing his arms about

the trunk of a big tree, and running round and round it, clasping it. This seemed to make him quite inexpressibly happy. His face lit up and beamed with that inner beatitude blind people show—a kind of rapture shining over it, as though nothing could be more altogether delightful. This little boy had the small pox at eight months, and has never been able to see since. He looks sturdy, and may live to be of any age—doomed always, is that possible, to beg?

### CHIUSI.

What more enjoyable dinner can be imagined than a flask of excellent Montepulciano, a well-cooked steak, and a little goat's cheese in the inn of the Leone d'Oro at Chiusi? The windows are open, and the sun is setting. Monte Cetona bounds the view to the right, and the wooded hills of Città della Pieve to the left. The deep green dimpled valley goes stretching away toward Orvieto; and at its end a purple mountain mass, distinct and solitary, which may peradventure be Soracte! The near country is broken into undulating hills, forested with fine olives and oaks; and the composition of the landscape, with its crowning villages, is worthy of a background to an Umbrian picture. The breadth and depth and quiet which those painters loved, the space of lucid sky, the suggestion of winding waters in verdant fields, all are here. The evening is beautiful—golden light streaming softly from behind us on this prospect, and gradually mellowing to violet and blue with stars above.

At Chiusi we visited several Etruscan tombs, and saw their red and black scrawled pictures. One of the sepulchres was a well-jointed vault of stone with no wall-paintings. The rest had been scooped out of the living tufa. This was the excuse for some pleasant hours spent in walking and driving through the country. Chiusi means for me the mingling of grey olives

and green oaks in limpid sunlight ; deep leafy lanes ; warm sand-stone banks ; copses with nightingales and cyclamens and cuckoos ; glimpses of a silvery lake ; blue shadowy distances ; the bristling ridge of Monte Cetona ; the conical towers, Becca di Questo and Becca di Quello, over against each other on the borders ; ways winding among hedgerows like some bit of England in June, but not so full of flowers. It means all this, I fear, for me far more than theories about Lars Porsenna and Etruscan ethnology.

## GUBBIO.

Gubbio ranks among the most ancient of Italian hill-towns. With its back set firm against the spine of central Apennines, and piled, house over house, upon the rising slope, it commands a rich tract of upland champaign, bounded southward toward Perugia and Foligno by peaked and rolling ridges. This amphitheatre, which forms its source of wealth and independence, is admirably protected by a chain of natural defences ; and Gubbio wears a singularly old-world aspect of antiquity and isolation. Houses climb right to the crests of gaunt bare peaks ; and the brown mediæval walls with square towers which protected them upon the mountain side, following the inequalities of the ground, are still a marked feature in the landscape. It is a town of steep streets and staircases, with quaintly framed prospects, and solemn vistas opening at every turn across the lowland. One of these views might be selected for especial notice. In front, irregular buildings losing themselves in country as they straggle by the roadside ; then the open post-road with a cypress to the right ; afterwards, the rich green fields, and on a bit of rising ground an ancient farmhouse with its brown dependencies ; lastly, the blue hills above Fossato, and far away a wrack of tumbling clouds. All this enclosed by the heavy archway of the Porta

Romana, where sunlight and shadow chequer the mellow tones of a dim fresco, indistinct with age, but beautiful.

Gubbio has not greatly altered since the middle ages. But poor people are now living in the palaces of noblemen and merchants. These new inhabitants have walled up the fair arched windows and slender portals of the ancient dwellers, spoiling the beauty of the streets without materially changing the architectural masses. In that witching hour when the Italian sunset has faded, and a solemn grey replaces the glowing tones of daffodil and rose, it is not difficult, here dreaming by oneself alone, to picture the old noble life—the ladies moving along those open loggias, the young men in plumed caps and curling hair with one foot on those doorsteps, the knights in armour and the sumpter mules and red-robed Cardinals defiling through those gates into the courts within. The modern bricks and mortar with which that picturesque scene has been overlaid, the ugly oblong windows and bright green shutters which now interrupt the flowing lines of arch and gallery; these disappear beneath the fine remembered touch of a sonnet sung by Folgore, when still the Parties had their day, and this deserted city was the centre of great aims and throbbing aspirations.

The names of the chief buildings in Gubbio are strongly suggestive of the middle ages. They abut upon a Piazza de' Signori. One of them, the Palazzo del Municipio, is a shapeless unfinished block of masonry. It is here that the Eugubine tables, plates of brass with Umbrian and Roman incised characters, are shown. The Palazzo de' Consoli has higher architectural qualities, and is indeed unique among Italian palaces for the combination of massiveness with lightness in a situation of unprecedented boldness. Rising from enormous substructures morticed into the solid hill-side, it rears its vast rectangular bulk to a giddy height above the town; airy loggias imposed on great forbidding masses of brown stone,



shooting aloft into a light aerial tower. The empty halls inside are of fair proportions and a noble size, and the views from the open colonnades in all directions fascinate. But the final impression made by the building is one of square, tranquil, massive strength—perpetuity embodied in masonry—force suggesting facility by daring and successful addition of elegance to hugeness. Vast as it is, this pile is not forbidding, as a similarly weighty structure in the North would be. The fine quality of the stone and the delicate though simple mouldings of the windows give it an Italian grace.

These public palaces belong to the age of the Communes, when Gubbio was a free town, with a policy of its own, and an important part to play in the internecine struggles of Pope and Empire, Guelf and Ghibelline. The ruined, deserted, degraded Palazzo Ducale reminds us of the advent of the despots. It has been stripped of all its tarsia-work and sculpture. Only here and there a Fe. D., with the cupping-glass of Federigo di Montefeltro, remains to show that Gubbio once became the fairest fief of the Urbino duchy. S. Ubaldo, who gave his name to this duke's son, was the patron of Gubbio, and to him the cathedral is dedicated—one low enormous vault, like a cellar or feudal banqueting hall, roofed with a succession of solid Gothic arches. This strange old church, and the House of Canons, buttressed on the hill beside it, have suffered less from modernisation than most buildings in Gubbio. The latter, in particular, helps one to understand what this city of grave palazzi must have been, and how the mere opening of old doors and windows would restore it to its primitive appearance. The House of the Canons has, in fact, not yet been given over to the use of middle-class and proletariat.

At the end of a day in Gubbio, it is pleasant to take our ease in the primitive hostelry, at the back of which foams a mountain-torrent, rushing downward from the Apennines.



The Gubbio wine is very fragrant, and of a rich ruby colour. Those to whom the tints of wine and jewels give a pleasure not entirely childish, will take delight in its specific blending of tawny hues with rose. They serve the table still, at Gubbio, after the antique Italian fashion, covering it with a cream-coloured linen cloth bordered with coarse lace—the creases of the press, the scent of old herbs from the wardrobe, are still upon it—and the board is set with shallow dishes of warm, white earthenware, basket-worked in open lattice at the edge, which contain little separate messes of meat, vegetables, cheese, and comfits. The wine stands in strange, slender phials of smooth glass, with stoppers; and the amber-coloured bread lies in fair round loaves upon the cloth. Dining thus is like sitting down to the supper at Emmaus, in some picture of Gian Bellini or of Masolino. The very bareness of the room—its open rafters, plastered walls, primitive settees, and red-brick floor, on which a dog sits waiting for a bone—enhances the impression of artistic delicacy in the table.

#### FROM GUBBIO TO FANO.

The road from Gubbio, immediately after leaving the city, enters a narrow Alpine ravine, where a thin stream dashes over dark, red rocks, and pendent saxifrages wave to the winds. The carriage in which we travelled at the end of May, one morning, had two horses, which our driver soon supplemented with a couple of white oxen. Slowly and toilsomely we ascended between the flanks of barren hills—gaunt masses of crimson and grey crag, clothed at their summits with short turf and scanty pasture. The pass leads first to the little town of Scheggia, and is called the Monte Calvo, or bald mountain. At Scheggia, it joins the great Flaminian Way, or North road of the Roman armies. At the top there is a fine view over the conical hills that dominate Gubbio, and, far away, to

noble mountains above the Furlo and the Foligno line of railway to Ancona. Range rises over range, crossing at unexpected angles, breaking into sudden precipices, and stretching out long, exquisitely-modelled outlines, as only Apennines can do, in silvery sobriety of colours toned by clearest air. Every square piece of this austere, wild landscape forms a varied picture, whereof the composition is due to subtle arrangements of lines always delicate; and these lines seem somehow to have been determined in their beauty by the vast antiquity of the mountain system, as though they all had taken time to choose their place and wear down into harmony. The effect of tempered sadness was heightened for us by stormy lights and dun clouds, high in air, rolling vapours and flying shadows, over all the prospect, tinted in ethereal grisaille.

After Scheggia, one enters a land of meadow and oak-trees. This is the sacred central tract of Jupiter Apenninus, whose fane—

*Delubra Jovis saxoque minantes  
Apenninigenis cultae pastoribus arae*

—once rose behind us on the bald Iguvian summits. A second little pass leads from this region to the Adriatic side of the Italian watershed, and the road now follows the Barano downward toward the sea. The valley is fairly green with woods, where misletoe may here and there be seen on boughs of oak, and rich with cornfields. Cagli is the chief town of the district, and here they show one of the best pictures left to us by Raphael's father, Giovanni Santi. It is a Madonna, attended by S. Peter, S. Francis, S. Dominic, S. John, and two angels. One of the angels is traditionally supposed to have been painted from the boy Raphael, and the face has something which reminds us of his portraits. The whole composition, excellent in modelling, harmonious in grouping, soberly but strongly coloured, with a peculiar blending of dignity and sweet-

ness, grace and vigour, makes one wonder why Santi thought it necessary to send his son from his own workshop to study under Perugino. He was himself a master of his art, and this, perhaps the most agreeable of his paintings, has a masculine sincerity which is absent from at least the later works of Perugino.

Some miles beyond Cagli, the real pass of the Furlo begins. It owes its name to a narrow tunnel bored by Vespasian in the solid rock, where limestone crags descend on the Barano. The Romans called this gallery *Petra Pertusa*, or *Intercisa*, or more familiarly *Forulus*, whence comes the modern name. Indeed, the stations on the old Flaminian Way are still well marked by Latin designations; for Cagli is the ancient *Calles*, and Fossombrone is *Forum Sempronii*, and Fano the *Fanum Fortunæ*. Vespasian commemorated this early achievement in engineering by an inscription carved on the living stone, which still remains; and Claudian, when he sang the journey of his Emperor Honorius from Rimini to Rome, speaks thus of what was even then an object of astonishment to travellers:—

*Laetior hinc fano recipit fortuna vetusto,  
Despiciturque vagus praerupta valle Metaurus,  
Qua mons arte patens vivo se perforat arcu  
Admittitque viam sectae per viscera rupis.*

The *Forulus* itself may now be matched, on any Alpine pass, by several tunnels of far mightier dimensions; for it is narrow, and does not extend more than 126 feet in length. But it occupies a fine position at the end of a really imposing ravine. The whole Furlo Pass might, without too much exaggeration, be described as a kind of Cheddar on the scale of the *Via Mala*. The limestone rocks, which rise on either hand above the gorge to an enormous height, are noble in form and solemn, like a succession of gigantic portals, with stupendous flanking obelisks and pyramids. Some of these

crag-masses rival the fantastic cliffs of Capri, and all consist of that southern mountain limestone which changes from pale yellow to blue grey and dusky orange. A river roars precipitately through the pass, and the road-sides wave with many sorts of campanulas—a profusion of azure and purple bells upon the hard white stone. Of Roman remains there is still enough (in the way of Roman bridges and bits of broken masonry) to please an antiquary's eye. But the lover of nature will dwell chiefly on the picturesque qualities of this historic gorge, so alien to the general character of Italian scenery, and yet so remote from anything to which Swiss travelling accustoms one.

The Furlo breaks out into a richer land of mighty oaks and waving cornfields, a fat pastoral country, not unlike Devonshire in detail, with green uplands, and wild-rose tangled hedgerows, and much running water, and abundance of summer flowers. At a point above Fossombrone, the Barano joins the Metauro, and here one has a glimpse of far-away Urbino, high upon its mountain eyrie. It is so rare, in spite of immemorial belief, to find in Italy a wilderness of wild flowers, that I feel inclined to make a list of those I saw from our carriage windows as we rolled down lazily along the road to Fossombrone. Broom, and cythus, and hawthorn mingled with roses, gladiolus, and saintfoil. There were orchises, and clematis, and privet, and wild-vine, vetches of all hues, red poppies, sky-blue cornflowers, and lilac pimpernel. In the rougher hedges, dogwood, honey-suckle, pyracanth, and acacia made a network of white bloom and blushes. Milkworts of all bright and tender tints combined with borage, iris, hawkweeds, harebells, crimson clover, thyme, red snapdragon, golden asters, and dreamy love-in-a-mist, to weave a marvellous carpet such as the looms of Shiraz or of Cashmere never spread. Rarely have I gazed on Flora in such riot, such luxuriance, such self-abandonment to joy. The air was filled with fragrances. Songs of cuckoos and



nightingales echoed from the copses on the hill-sides. The sun was out, and dancing over all the landscape.

After all this, Fano was very restful in the quiet sunset. It has a sandy stretch of shore, on which the long, green-yellow rollers of the Adriatic broke into creamy foam, beneath the waning saffron light over Pesaro and the rosy rising of a full moon. This Adriatic sea carries an English mind home to many a little watering-place upon our coast. In colour and the shape of waves it resembles our Channel.

The sea-shore is Fano's great attraction ; but the town has many churches, and some creditable pictures, as well as Roman antiquities. Giovanni Santi may here be seen almost as well as at Cagli ; and of Perugino there is one truly magnificent altar-piece—lunette, great centre panel, and predella—dusty in its present condition, but splendidly painted, and happily not yet restored or cleaned. It is worth journeying to Fano to see this. Still better would the journey be worth the traveller's while if he could be sure to witness such a game of *Pallone* as we chanced upon in the Via dell' Arco di Augusto—lads and grown-men, tightly girt, in shirt sleeves, driving the great ball aloft into the air with cunning bias and calculation of projecting house-eaves. I do not understand the game ; but it was clearly played something after the manner of our football, that is to say, with sides, and front and back players so arranged as to cover the greatest number of angles of incidence on either wall.

Fano still remembers that it is the Fane of Fortune. On the fountain in the market-place stands a bronze Fortuna, slim and airy, offering her veil to catch the wind. May she long shower health and prosperity upon the modern watering-place of which she is the patron saint !

## THE PALACE OF URBINO.

### I.

AT Rimini, one spring, the impulse came upon my wife and me to make our way across San Marino to Urbino. In the Piazza, called apocryphally after Julius Cæsar, I found a proper *vetturino*, with a good carriage and two indefatigable horses. He was a splendid fellow, and bore a great historic name, as I discovered when our bargain was completed. "What are you called?" I asked him. "*Filippo Visconti, per servirla!*" was the prompt reply. Brimming over with the darkest memories of the Italian Renaissance, I hesitated when I heard this answer. The associations seemed too ominous. And yet the man himself was so attractive—tall, stalwart, and well-looking—no feature of his face or limb of his athletic form recalling the gross tyrant who concealed worse than Caligula's ugliness from sight in secret chambers—that I shook this preconception from my mind. As it turned out, Filippo Visconti had nothing in common with his infamous namesake but the name. On a long and trying journey, he showed neither sullen nor yet ferocious tempers; nor, at the end of it, did he attempt by any master-stroke of craft to wheedle from me more than his fair pay; but took the meerschaum pipe I gave him for a keepsake, with the frank good-will of an accomplished gentleman. The only exhibition of his hot Italian blood which I remember did his humanity credit. While we were ascending a steep hillside, he jumped from his box to thrash a ruffian by the roadside for brutal treatment to a little boy. He broke

his whip, it is true, in this encounter ; risked a dangerous quarrel ; and left his carriage, with myself and wife inside it, to the mercy of his horses in a somewhat perilous position. But when he came back, hot and glowing, from this deed of justice, I could only applaud his zeal.

✓ An Italian of this type, handsome as an antique statue, with the refinement of a modern gentleman and that intelligence which is innate in a race of immemorial culture, is a fascinating being. He may be absolutely ignorant in all book-learning. He may be as ignorant as a Bersagliere from Montalcino with whom I once conversed at Rimini, who gravely said that he could walk in three months to North America, and thought of doing it when his term of service was accomplished. But he will display, as this young soldier did, a grace and ease of address which are rare in London drawing-rooms ; and by his shrewd remarks upon the cities he has visited, will show that he possesses a fine natural taste for things of beauty. The speech of such men, drawn from the common stock of the Italian people, is seasoned with proverbial sayings, the wisdom of centuries condensed in a few nervous words. When emotion fires their brain, they break into spontaneous eloquence, or suggest the motive of a poem by phrases pregnant with imagery.

For the first stage of the journey out of Rimini, Filippo's two horses sufficed. The road led almost straight across the level between quickset hedges in white bloom. But when we reached the long steep hill which ascends to San Marino, the inevitable oxen were called out, and we toiled upwards leisurely through cornfields bright with red anemones and sweet narcissus. At this point pomegranate hedges replaced the May-thorns of the plain. In course of time our *bovi* brought us to the Borgo, or lower town, whence there is a further ascent of seven hundred feet to the topmost hawk's-nest or acropolis of the republic. These we climbed on foot,

watching the view expand around us and beneath. Cragg of limestone here break down abruptly to the rolling hills, which go to lose themselves in field and shore. Misty reaches of the Adriatic close the world to eastward. Cesena, Rimini, Verucchio, and countless hill-set villages, each isolated on its tract of verdure conquered from the stern grey soil, define the points where Montefeltri wrestled with Malatestas in long bygone years. Around are marly mountain-flanks in wrinkles and gnarled convolutions like some giant's brain, furrowed by rivers crawling through dry wasteful beds of shingle. Interminable ranges of gaunt Apennines stretch, tier by tier, beyond; and over all this landscape, a grey-green mist of rising crops and new-fledged oak-trees lies like a veil upon the nakedness of Nature's ruins.

Nothing in Europe conveys a more striking sense of geological antiquity than such a prospect. The denudation and abrasion of innumerable ages, wrought by slow persistent action of weather and water on an upheaved mountain mass, are here made visible. Every wave in that vast sea of hills, every furrow in their worn flanks, tells its tale of a continuous corrosion still in progress. The dominant impression is one of melancholy. We forget how Romans, countermarching Carthaginians, trod the land beneath us. The marvel of San Marino, retaining independence through the drums and trappings of the last seven centuries, is swallowed in a deeper sense of wonder. We turn instinctively in thought to Leopardi's musings on man's destiny at war with unknown nature-forces and malignant rulers of the universe.

Omai disprezza  
Te, la natura, il brutto  
Poter che, ascoso, a comun danno impera,  
E l' infinita vanità del tutto.

And then, straining our eyes southward, we sweep the dim blue distance for Recanati, and remember that the poet of modern



despair and discouragement was reared in even such a scene as this.

The town of San Marino is grey, narrow-streeted, simple ; with a great, new, decent, Greek-porticoed cathedral, dedicated to the eponymous saint. A certain austerity defines it from more picturesque hill-cities with a less uniform history. There is a marble statue of S. Marino in the choir of his church ; and in his cell is shown the stone bed and pillow on which he took austere repose. One narrow window near the saint's abode commands a proud but melancholy landscape of distant hills and seaboard. To this, the great absorbing charm of San Marino, our eyes instinctively, recurrently, take flight. It is a landscape which by variety and beauty thralls attention, but which by its interminable sameness might grow almost overpowering. There is no relief. The gladness shed upon far humbler Northern lands in May is ever absent here. The German word *Gemüthlichkeit*, the English phrase "a home of ancient peace," are here alike by art and nature untranslating into visibilities. And yet (as we who gaze upon it thus are fain to think) if peradventure the intolerable *ennui* of this panorama should drive a citizen of San Marino into outlands, the same view would haunt him whithersoever he went—the swallows of his native eyrie would shrill through his sleep—he would yearn to breathe its fine keen air in winter, and to watch its iris-hedges deck themselves with blue in spring ;—like Virgil's hero, dying, he would think of San Marino : *Aspicit, et dulces moriens reminiscitur Argos*. Even a passing stranger may feel the mingled fascination and oppression of this prospect—the monotony which maddens, the charm which at a distance grows upon the mind, environing it with memories.

Descending to the Borgo, we found that Filippo Visconti had ordered a luncheon of excellent white bread, pigeons, and omelette, with the best red muscat wine I ever drank, unless

the sharp air of the hills deceived my appetite. An Italian history of San Marino, including its statutes, in three volumes, furnished intellectual food. But I confess to having learned from these pages little else than this: first, that the survival of the Commonwealth through all phases of European politics had been semi-miraculous; secondly, that the most eminent San Marinesi had been lawyers. It is possible on a hasty deduction from these two propositions (to which, however, I am far from wishing to commit myself), that the latter is a sufficient explanation of the former.

From San Marino the road plunges at a break-neck pace. We are now in the true Feltrian highlands, whence the Counts of Montefeltro issued in the twelfth century. Yonder eyrie is San Leo, which formed the key of entrance to the duchy of Urbino in campaigns fought many hundred years ago. Perched on the crest of a precipitous rock, this fortress looks as though it might defy all enemies but famine. And yet San Leo was taken and re-taken by strategy and fraud, when Montefeltro, Borgia, Malatesta, Rovere, contended for dominion in these valleys. Yonder is Sta. Agata, the village to which Guidobaldo fled by night when Valentino drove him from his dukedom. A little farther towers Carpegna, where one branch of the Montefeltro house maintained a countship through seven centuries, and only sold their fief to Rome in 1815. Monte Coppiolo lies behind, Pietra Rubia in front: two other eagle's-nests of the same brood. What a road it is! It beats the tracks on Exmoor. The uphill and downhill of Devonshire scorns compromise or mitigation by *détour* and zigzag. But here geography is on a scale so far more vast, and the roadway is so far worse metalled than with us in England—knotty masses of talc and nodes of sandstone cropping up at dangerous turnings—that only Dante's words describe the journey:—

Vassi in Sanleo, e discendesi in Noli,  
Montasi su Bismantova in cacume  
Con esso i piè; ma qui convien ch' uom voli.

Of a truth, our horses seemed rather to fly than scramble up and down these rugged precipices; Visconti cheerily animating them with the brave spirit that was in him, and lending them his wary driver's help of hand and voice at need.

We were soon upon a cornice-road between the mountains and the Adriatic: following the curves of gulch and cleft ravine; winding round ruined castles set on points of vantage; the sea-line high above their grass-grown battlements, the shadow-dappled champaign girdling their bastions mortised on the naked rock. Except for the blue lights across the distance, and the ever-present sea, these earthy Apennines would be too grim. Infinite air and this spare veil of spring-tide greenery on field and forest soothe their sternness. Two rivers, swollen by late rains, had to be forded. Through one of these, the Foglia, bare-legged peasants led the way. The horses waded to their bellies in the tawny water. Then more hills and vales; green nooks with rippling corn-crops; secular oaks attired in golden leafage. The clear afternoon air rang with the voices of a thousand larks overhead. The whole world seemed quivering with light and delicate ethereal sound. And yet my mind turned irresistibly to thoughts of war, violence, and pillage. How often has this intermediate land been fought over by Montefeltro and Brancaleoni, by Borgia and Malatesta, by Medici and Della Rovere! Its *contadini* are robust men, almost statuesque in build, and beautiful of feature. No wonder that the Princes of Urbino, with such materials to draw from, sold their service and their troops to Florence, Rome, S. Mark, and Milan. The bearing of these peasants is still soldierly and proud. Yet they are not sullen or forbidding like the Sicilians, whose habits of

life, for the rest, much resemble theirs. The villages, there as here, are few and far between, perched high on rocks, from which the folk descend to till the ground and reap the harvest. But the southern *brusquerie* and brutality are absent from this district. The men have something of the dignity and slow-eyed mildness of their own huge oxen. As evening fell, more solemn Apennines upreared themselves to southward. The Monte d'Asdrubale, Monte Nerone, and Monte Catria hove into sight. At last, when light was dim, a tower rose above the neighbouring ridge, a broken outline of some city barred the sky-line. Urbino stood before us. Our long day's march was at an end.

The sunset was almost spent, and a four days' moon hung above the western Apennines, when we took our first view of the palace. It is a fancy-thralling work of wonder seen in that dim twilight; like some castle reared by Atlante's magic for imprisonment of Ruggiero, or palace sought in fairyland by Astolf winding his enchanted horn. Where shall we find its like, combining, as it does, the buttressed battlemented bulk of mediæval strongholds with the airy balconies, suspended gardens, and fantastic turrets of Italian pleasure-houses? This unique blending of the feudal past with the Renaissance spirit of the time when it was built, connects it with the art of Ariosto—or more exactly with Boiardo's epic. Duke Federigo planned his palace at Urbino just at the moment when the Count of Scandiano had begun to chaunt his lays of Roland in the Castle of Ferrara. Chivalry, transmuted by the Italian genius into something fanciful and quaint, survived as a frail work of art. The men-at-arms of the Condottieri still glittered in gilded hauberks. Their helmets waved with plumes and bizarre crests. Their surcoats blazed with heraldries; their velvet caps with medals bearing legendary emblems. The pomp and circumstance of feudal war had not yet yielded to the cannon of the Gascon



or the Switzer's pike. The fatal age of foreign invasions had not begun for Italy. Within a few years Charles VIII.'s holiday excursion would reveal the internal rottenness and weakness of her rival states, and the peninsula for half a century to come would be drenched in the blood of Frenchmen, Germans, Spaniards, fighting for her cities as their prey. But now Lorenzo de' Medici was still alive. The famous policy which bears his name held Italy suspended for a golden time in false tranquillity and independence. The princes who shared his culture and his love of art were gradually passing into modern noblemen, abandoning the savage feuds and passions of more virile centuries, yielding to luxury and scholarly enjoyments. The castles were becoming courts, and despotisms won by force were settling into dynasties.

It was just at this epoch that Duke Federigo built his castle at Urbino. One of the ablest and wealthiest Condottieri of his time, one of the best instructed and humanest of Italian princes, he combined in himself the qualities which mark that period of transition. And these he impressed upon his dwelling-house, which looks backward to the mediæval fortalice and forward to the modern palace. This makes it the just embodiment in architecture of Italian romance, the perfect analogue of the *Orlando Innamorato*. By comparing it with the castle of the Estes at Ferrara and the Palazzo del Te of the Gonzagas at Mantua, we place it in its right position between mediæval and Renaissance Italy, between the age when principalities arose upon the ruins of commercial independence and the age when they became dynastic under Spain.

The exigencies of the ground at his disposal forced Federigo to give the building an irregular outline. The fine façade, with its embayed *loggie* and flanking turrets, is placed too close upon the city ramparts for its due effect. We are obliged to

cross the deep ravine which separates it from a lower quarter of the town, and take our station near the Oratory of S. Giovanni Battista, before we can appreciate the beauty of its design, or the boldness of the group it forms with the cathedral dome and tower and the square masses of numerous out-buildings. Yet this peculiar position of the palace, though baffling to a close observer of its details, is one of singular advantage to the inhabitants. Set on the verge of Urbino's towering eminence, it fronts a wave-tossed sea of vales and mountain summits toward the rising and the setting sun. There is nothing but illimitable air between the terraces and loggias of the Duchess's apartments and the spreading pyramid of Monte Catria.

A nobler scene is nowhere swept from palace windows than this, which Castiglione touched in a memorable passage at the end of his *Cortegiano*. To one who in our day visits Urbino, it is singular how the slight indications of this sketch, as in some silhouette, bring back the antique life, and link the present with the past—a hint, perhaps, for reticence in our descriptions. The gentlemen and ladies of the court had spent a summer night in long debate on love, rising to the height of mystical Platonic rapture on the lips of Bembo, when one of them exclaimed, "The day has broken!" "He pointed to the light which was beginning to enter by the fissures of the windows. Whereupon we flung the casements wide upon that side of the palace which looks toward the high peak of Monte Catria, and saw that a fair dawn of rosy hue was born already in the eastern skies, and all the stars had vanished except the sweet regent of the heaven of Venus, who holds the borderlands of day and night; and from her sphere it seemed as though a gentle wind were breathing, filling the air with eager freshness, and waking among the numerous woods upon the neighbouring hills the sweet-toned symphonies of joyous birds."

## II.

The House of Montefeltro rose into importance early in the twelfth century. Frederick Barbarossa erected their fief into a county in 1160. Supported by imperial favour, they began to exercise an undefined authority over the district, which they afterwards converted into a duchy. But, though Ghibelline for several generations, the Montefeltri were too near neighbours of the Papal power to free themselves from ecclesiastical vassalage. Therefore in 1216 they sought and obtained the title of Vicars of the Church. Urbino acknowledged them as semi-despots in their double capacity of Imperial and Papal deputies. Cagli and Gubbio followed in the fourteenth century. In the fifteenth, Castel Durante was acquired from the Brancaloni by warfare, and Fossombrone from the Malatestas by purchase. Numerous fiefs and villages fell into their hands upon the borders of Rimini in the course of a continued struggle with the House of Malatesta: and when Fano and Pesaro were added at the opening of the sixteenth century, the domain over which they ruled was a compact territory, some forty miles square, between the Adriatic and the Apennines. From the close of the thirteenth century they bore the title of Counts of Urbino. The famous Conte Guido, whom Dante placed among the fraudulent in hell, supported the honours of the house and increased its power by his political action, at this epoch. But it was not until the year 1443 that the Montefeltri acquired their ducal title. This was conferred by Eugenius IV. upon Oddantonio, over whose alleged crimes and indubitable assassination a veil of mystery still hangs. He was the son of Count Guidantonio, and at his death the Montefeltri of Urbino were extinct in the legitimate line. A natural son of Guidantonio had been, however, recognised in his father's

lifetime, and married to Gentile, heiress of Mercatello. This was Federigo, a youth of great promise, who succeeded his half-brother in 1444 as Count of Urbino. It was not until 1474 that the ducal title was revived for him.

Duke Frederick was a prince remarkable among Italian despots for private virtues and sober use of his hereditary power. He spent his youth at Mantua, in that famous school of Vittorino da Feltre, where the sons and daughters of the first Italian nobility received a model education in humanities, good manners, and gentle physical accomplishments. More than any of his fellow-students Frederick profited by this rare scholar's discipline. On leaving school he adopted the profession of arms, as it was then practised, and joined the troop of the Condottiere Niccolò Piccinino. Young men of his own rank, especially the younger sons and bastards of ruling families, sought military service under captains of adventure. If they succeeded they were sure to make money. The coffers of the Church and the republics lay open to their not too scrupulous hands; the wealth of Milan and Naples was squandered on them in retaining-fees and salaries for active service. There was always the further possibility of placing a coronet upon their brows before they died, if haply they should wrest a town from their employers, or obtain the cession of a province from a needy Pope. The neighbours of the Montefeltri in Umbria, Romagna, and the Marches of Ancona were all of them Condottieri. Malatestas of Rimini and Pesaro, Vitelli of Città di Castello, Varani of Camerino, Baglioni of Perugia, to mention only a few of the most eminent nobles, enrolled themselves under the banners of plebeian adventurers like Piccinino and Sforza Attendolo. Though their family connections gave them a certain advantage, the system was essentially democratic. Gattamelata and Carmagnola sprang from obscurity by personal address and courage to the command of armies. Colleoni fought his way up from the grooms



to princely station and the *bâton* of S. Mark. Francesco Sforza, whose father had begun life as a tiller of the soil, seized the ducal crown of Milan, and founded a house which ranked among the first in Europe.

It is not needful to follow Duke Frederick in his military career. We may briefly remark that when he succeeded to Urbino by his brother's death in 1444, he undertook generalship on a grand scale. His own dominions supplied him with some of the best troops in Italy. He was careful to secure the good-will of his subjects by attending personally to their interests, relieving them of imposts, and executing equal justice. He gained the then unique reputation of an honest prince, paternally disposed toward his dependants. Men flocked to his standards willingly, and he was able to bring an important contingent into any army. These advantages secured for him alliances with Francesco Sforza, and brought him successively into connection with Milan, Venice, Florence, the Church of Naples. As a tactician in the field he held high rank among the generals of the age, and so considerable were his engagements that he acquired great wealth in the exercise of his profession. We find him at one time receiving 8000 ducats a month as war-pay from Naples, with a peace pension of 6000. While Captain-General of the League, he drew for his own use in war 45,000 ducats of annual pay. Retaining-fees and pensions in the name of past services swelled his income, the exact extent of which has not, so far as I am aware, been estimated, but which must have made him one of the richest of Italian princes. All this wealth he spent upon his duchy, fortifying and beautifying its cities, drawing youths of promise to his court, maintaining a great train of life, and keeping his vassals in good-humour by the lightness of a rule which contrasted favourably with the exactions of needier despots.

While fighting for the masters who offered him *condotta* in

the complicated wars of Italy, Duke Frederick used his arms, when occasion served, in his own quarrels. Many years of his life were spent in a prolonged struggle with his neighbour Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, the bizarre and brilliant tyrant of Rimini, who committed the fatal error of embroiling himself beyond all hope of pardon with the Church, and who died discomfited in the duel with his warier antagonist. Urbino profited by each mistake of Sigismondo, and the history of this long desultory strife with Rimini is a history of gradual aggrandisement and consolidation for the Montefeltrian duchy.

In 1459, Duke Frederick married his second wife, Battista, daughter of Alessandro Sforza, Lord of Pesaro. Their portraits, painted by Piero della Francesca, are to be seen in the Uffizzi at Florence. Some years earlier, Frederick lost his right eye and had the bridge of his nose broken in a jousting match outside the town-gate of Urbino. After this accident, he preferred to be represented in profile—the profile so well known to students of Italian art on medals and bas-reliefs. It was not without medical aid and vows fulfilled by a mother's self-sacrifice to death, if we may trust the diarists of Urbino, that the ducal couple got an heir. In 1472, however a son was born to them, whom they christened Guido Paolo Ubaldo. He proved a youth of excellent parts and noble nature—apt at study, perfect in all chivalrous accomplishments. But he inherited some fatal physical debility, and his life was marred with a constitutional disease, which then received the name of gout, and which deprived him of the free use of his limbs. After his father's death in 1482, Naples, Florence, and Milan continued Frederick's war engagements to Guidobaldo. The prince was but a boy of ten. Therefore these important *condotte* must be regarded as compliments and pledges for the future. They prove to what a pitch Duke Frederick had raised the credit of his state and war establishment. Seven years later,

Guidobaldo married Elisabetta, daughter of Francesco Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua. This union, though a happy one, was never blessed with children ; and in the certainty of barrenness, the young Duke thought it prudent to adopt a nephew as heir to his dominions. He had several sisters, one of whom, Giovanna, had been married to a nephew of Sixtus IV., Giovanni della Rovere, Lord of Sinigaglia and Prefect of Rome. They had a son, Francesco Maria, who, after his adoption by Guidobaldo, spent his boyhood at Urbino.

The last years of the fifteenth century were marked by the sudden rise of Cesare Borgia to a power which threatened the liberties of Italy. Acting as General for the Church, he carried his arms against the petty tyrants of Romagna, whom he dispossessed and extirpated. His next move was upon Camerino and Urbino. He first acquired Camerino, having lulled Guidobaldo into false security by treacherous professions of good-will. Suddenly the Duke received intelligence that the Borgia was marching on him over Cagli. This was in the middle of June 1502. It is difficult to comprehend the state of weakness in which Guidobaldo was surprised, or the panic which then seized him. He made no efforts to rouse his subjects to resistance, but fled by night with his nephew through rough mountain roads, leaving his capital and palace to the marauder. Cesare Borgia took possession without striking a blow, and removed the treasures of Urbino to the Vatican. His occupation of the duchy was not undisturbed, however ; for the people rose in several places against him, proving that Guidobaldo had yielded too hastily to alarm. By this time the fugitive was safe in Mantua, whence he returned, and for a short time succeeded in establishing himself again at Urbino. But he could not hold his own against the Borgias, and in December, by a treaty, he resigned his claims and retired to Venice, where he lived upon the bounty of S. Mark. It must be said, in justice to the Duke, that his constitutional debility

rendered him unfit for active operations in the field. Perhaps he could not have done better than thus to bend beneath the storm.

The sudden death of Alexander VI. and the election of a Della Rovere to the Papacy in 1503 changed Guidobaldo's prospects. Julius II. was the sworn foe of the Borgias and the close kinsman of Urbino's heir. It was therefore easy for the Duke to walk into his empty palace on the hill, and to reinstate himself in the domains from which he had so recently been ousted. The rest of his life was spent in the retirement of his court, surrounded with the finest scholars and the noblest gentlemen of Italy. The ill-health which debarred him from the active pleasures and employments of his station, was borne with uniform sweetness of temper and philosophy.

When he died, in 1508, his nephew, Francesco Maria della Rovere, succeeded to the duchy, and once more made the palace of Urbino the resort of men-at-arms and captains. He was a prince of very violent temper: of its extravagance history has recorded three remarkable examples. He murdered the Cardinal of Pavia with his own hand in the streets of Ravenna; stabbed a lover of his sister to death at Urbino; and in a council of war knocked Francesco Guicciardini down with a blow of his fist. When the history of Italy came to be written, Guicciardini was probably mindful of that insult, for he painted Francesco Maria's character and conduct in dark colours. At the same time this Duke of Urbino passed for one of the first generals of the age. The greatest stain upon his memory is his behaviour in the year 1527, when, by dilatory conduct of the campaign in Lombardy, he suffered the passage of Frundsberg's army unopposed, and afterwards hesitated to relieve Rome from the horrors of the sack. He was the last Italian Condottiere of the antique type; and the vices which Machiavelli exposed in that bad system of mercenary



warfare were illustrated on these occasions. During his lifetime, the conditions of Italy were so changed by Charles V.'s imperial settlement in 1530, that the occupation of Condottiere ceased to have any meaning. Strozzi and Farnesi, who afterwards followed this profession, enlisted in the ranks of France or Spain, and won their laurels in Northern Europe.

While Leo X. held the Papal chair, the duchy of Urbino was for a while wrested from the house of Della Rovere, and conferred upon Lorenzo de' Medici. Francesco Maria made a better fight for his heritage than Guidobaldo had done. Yet he could not successfully resist the power of Rome. The Pope was ready to spend enormous sums of money on this petty war; the Duke's purse was shorter, and the mercenary troops he was obliged to use, proved worthless in the field. Spaniards, for the most part, pitted against Spaniards, they suffered the campaigns to degenerate into a guerilla warfare of pillage and reprisals. In 1517 the duchy was formally ceded to Lorenzo. But this Medici did not live long to enjoy it, and his only child Catherine, the future Queen of France, never exercised the rights which had devolved upon her by inheritance. The shifting scene of Italy beheld Francesco Maria reinstated in Urbino after Leo's death in 1522.

This Duke married Leonora Gonzaga, a princess of the house of Mantua. Their portraits, painted by Titian, adorn the Venetian room of the Uffizzi. Of their son, Guidobaldo II., little need be said. He was twice married, first to Giulia Varano, Duchess by inheritance of Camerino; secondly, to Vittoria Farnese, daughter of the Duke of Parma. Guidobaldo spent a lifetime in petty quarrels with his subjects, whom he treated badly, attempting to draw from their pockets the wealth which his father and the Montefeltri had won in military service. He intervened at an awkward period of Italian politics. The old Italy of despots, commonwealths, and Condottieri, in which his predecessors played substantial parts, was at an end. The

new Italy of Popes and Austro-Spanish dynasties had hardly settled into shape. Between these epochs, Guidobaldo II., of whom we have a dim and hazy presentation on the page of history, seems somehow to have fallen flat. As a sign of altered circumstances, he removed his court to Pesaro, and built the great palace of the Della Roveres upon the public square.

Guidobaldaccio, as he was called, died in 1574, leaving an only son, Francesco Maria II., whose life and character illustrate the new age which had begun for Italy. He was educated in Spain at the court of Philip II., where he spent more than two years. When he returned, his Spanish haughtiness, punctilious attention to etiquette, and superstitious piety attracted observation. The violent temper of the Della Roveres, which Francesco Maria I. displayed in acts of homicide, and which had helped to win his bad name for Guidobaldaccio, took the form of sullenness in the last Duke. The finest episode in his life was the part he played in the battle of Lepanto, under his old comrade, Don John of Austria. His father forced him to an uncongenial marriage with Lucrezia d'Este, Princess of Ferrara. She left him, and took refuge in her native city, then honoured by the presence of Tasso and Guarini. He bore her departure with philosophical composure, recording the event in his diary as something to be dryly grateful for. Left alone, the Duke abandoned himself to solitude, religious exercises, hunting, and the economy of his impoverished dominions. He became that curious creature, a man of narrow nature and mediocre capacity, who, dedicated to the cult of self, is fain to pass for saint and sage in easy circumstances. He married, for the second time, a lady, Livia della Rovere, who belonged to his own family, but had been born in private station. She brought him one son, the Prince Federigo-Ubaldo. This youth might have sustained the ducal honours of Urbino, but for his sage-saint father's want of

wisdom. The boy was a spoiled child in infancy. Inflated with Spanish vanity from the cradle, taught to regard his subjects as dependants on a despot's will, abandoned to the caprices of his own ungovernable temper, without substantial aid from the paternal piety or stoicism, he rapidly became a most intolerable princeling. His father married him, while yet a boy, to Claudia de' Medici, and virtually abdicated in his favour. Left to his own devices, Federigo chose companions from the troupes of players whom he drew from Venice. He filled his palaces with harlots, and degraded himself upon the stage in parts of mean buffoonery. The resources of the duchy were racked to support these parasites. Spanish rules of etiquette and ceremony were outraged by their orgies. His bride brought him one daughter, Vittoria, who afterwards became the wife of Ferdinand, Grand Duke of Tuscany. Then in the midst of his low dissipation and offences against ducal dignity, he died of apoplexy at the early age of eighteen—the victim, in the severe judgment of history, of his father's selfishness and want of practical ability.

This happened in 1623. Francesco Maria was stunned by the blow. His withdrawal from the duties of the sovereignty in favour of such a son had proved a constitutional unfitness for the duties of his station. The life he loved was one of seclusion in a round of pious exercises, petty studies, peddling economies, and mechanical amusements. A powerful and grasping Pope was on the throne of Rome. Urban at this juncture pressed Francesco Maria hard; and in 1624 the last Duke of Urbino devolved his lordships to the Holy See. He survived the formal act of abdication seven years; when he died, the Pontiff added his duchy to the Papal States, which thenceforth stretched from Naples to the bounds of Venice on the Po.

## III.

Duke Frederick began the palace at Urbino in 1454, when he was still only Count. The architect was Luziano of Lauranna, a Dalmatian; and the beautiful white limestone, hard as marble, used in the construction, was brought from the Dalmatian coast. This stone, like the Istrian stone of Venetian buildings, takes and retains the chisel mark with wonderful precision. It looks as though, when fresh, it must have had the pliancy of clay, so delicately are the finest curves in scroll or foliage scooped from its substance. And yet it preserves each cusp and angle of the most elaborate pattern with the crispness and the sharpness of a crystal. When wrought by a clever craftsman, its surface has neither the waxiness of Parian, nor the brittle edge of Carrara marble; and it resists weather better than marble of the choicest quality. This may be observed in many monuments of Venice, where the stone has been long exposed to sea-air. These qualities of the Dalmatian limestone, no less than its agreeable creamy hue and smooth dull polish, adapt it to decoration in low relief. The most attractive details in the palace at Urbino are friezes carved of this material in choice designs of early Renaissance dignity and grace. One chimney-piece in the Sala degli Angeli deserves especial comment. A frieze of dancing Cupids, with gilt hair and wings, their naked bodies left white on a ground of ultramarine, is supported by broad flat pilasters. These are engraved with children holding pots of flowers; roses on one side, carnations on the other. Above the frieze another pair of angels, one at each end, hold lighted torches; and the pyramidal cap of the chimney is carved with two more, flying, and supporting the eagle of the Montefeltro on a raised medallion. Throughout the palace we notice emblems appropriate to the Houses of Montefeltro and Della Rovere: their arms,



three golden bends upon a field of azure : the Imperial eagle, granted when Montefeltro was made a fief of the Empire : the Garter of England, worn by the Dukes Federigo and Guidobaldo : the ermine of Naples : the *ventosa*, or cupping-glass, adopted for a private badge by Frederick : the golden oak-tree on an azure field of Della Rovere : the palm-tree, bent beneath a block of stone, with its accompanying motto, *Inclinata Resurgam* : the cypher, FE DX. Profile medallions of Federigo and Guidobaldo, wrought in the lowest possible relief, adorn the staircases. Round the great courtyard runs a frieze of military engines and ensigns, trophies, machines, and implements of war, alluding to Duke Frederick's profession of Condottiere. The doorways are enriched with scrolls of heavy-headed flowers, acanthus foliage, honeysuckles, ivy-berries, birds and boys and sphinxes, in all the riot of Renaissance fancy.

This profusion of sculptured *rilievo* is nearly all that remains to show how rich the palace was in things of beauty. Castiglione, writing in the reign of Guidobaldo, says that "in the opinion of many it is the fairest to be found in Italy; and the Duke filled it so well with all things fitting its magnificence, that it seemed less like a palace than a city. Not only did he collect articles of common use, vessels of silver, and trappings for chambers of rare cloths of gold and silk, and such like furniture, but he added multitudes of bronze and marble statues, exquisite pictures, and instruments of music of all sorts. There was nothing but was of the finest and most excellent quality to be seen there. Moreover, he gathered together at a vast cost a large number of the best and rarest books in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, all of which he adorned with gold and silver, esteeming them the chiefest treasure of his spacious palace." When Cesare Borgia entered Urbino as conqueror in 1502, he is said to have carried off loot to the value of 150,000 ducats, or perhaps about a quarter

of a million sterling. Vespasiano, the Florentine bookseller, has left us a minute account of the formation of the famous library of MSS., which he valued at considerably over 30,000 ducats. Yet wandering now through these deserted halls, we seek in vain for furniture or tapestry or works of art. The books have been removed to Rome. The pictures are gone, no man knows whither. The plate has long been melted down. The instruments of music are broken. If frescoes adorned the corridors, they have been whitewashed; the ladies' chambers have been stripped of their rich arras. Only here and there we find a rafted ceiling, painted in fading colours, which, taken with the stonework of the chimney, and some fragments of inlaid panel-work on door or window, enables us to reconstruct the former richness of these princely rooms.

Exception must be made in favour of two apartments between the towers upon the southern façade. These were apparently the private rooms of the Duke and Duchess, and they are still approached by a great winding staircase in one of the *torricini*. Adorned in indestructible or irremovable materials, they retain some traces of their ancient splendour. On the first floor, opening on the vaulted loggia, we find a little chapel encrusted with lovely work in stucco and marble; friezes of bulls, sphinxes, sea-horses, and foliage; with a low relief of Madonna and Child in the manner of Mino da Fiesole. Close by is a small study with inscriptions to the Muses and Apollo. The cabinet connecting these two cells has a Latin legend, to say that Religion here dwells near the temple of the liberal arts:

Bina vides parvo discrimine juncta sacella,  
Altera pars Musis altera sacra Deo est.

On the floor above, corresponding in position to this apartment, is a second, of even greater interest, since it was

arranged by the Duke Frederick for his own retreat. The study is panelled in tarsia of beautiful design and execution. Three of the larger compartments show Faith, Hope, and Charity; figures not unworthy of a Botticelli or a Filippino Lippi. The occupations of the Duke are represented on a smaller scale by armour, *bâtons* of command, scientific instruments, lutes, viols, and books, some open and some shut. The Bible, Homer, Virgil, Seneca, Tacitus, and Cicero, are lettered; apparently to indicate his favourite authors. The Duke himself, arrayed in his state robes, occupies a fourth great panel; and the whole of this elaborate composition is harmonised by emblems, badges, and occasional devices of birds, articles of furniture, and so forth. The tarsia, or inlaid wood of different kinds and colours, is among the best in this kind of art to be found in Italy, though perhaps it hardly deserves to rank with the celebrated choir-stalls of Bergamo and Monte Oliveto. Hard by is a chapel, adorned, like the lower one, with excellent reliefs. The Loggia to which these rooms have access looks across the Apennines, and down on what was once a private garden. It is now enclosed and paved for the exercise of prisoners who are confined in one part of the desecrated palace!

A portion of the pile is devoted to more worthy purposes; for the Academy of Raphael here holds its sittings, and preserves a collection of curiosities and books illustrative of the great painter's life and works. They have recently placed in a tiny oratory, scooped by Guidobaldo II. from the thickness of the wall, a cast of Raphael's skull, which will be studied with interest and veneration. It has the fineness of modelling combined with shapeliness of form and smallness of scale which is said to have characterised Mozart and Shelley.

The impression left upon the mind after traversing this palace in its length and breadth is one of weariness and disappointment. How shall we reconstruct the long-past life

which filled its rooms with sound, the splendour of its pageants, the thrill of tragedies enacted here? It is not difficult to crowd its doors and vacant spaces with liveried servants, slim pages in tight hose, whose well-combed hair escapes from tiny caps upon their silken shoulders. We may even replace the tapestries of Troy which hung one hall, and build again the sideboards with their embossed gilded plate. But are these chambers really those where Emilia Pia held debate on love with Bembo and Castiglione; where Bibbiena's witticisms and Fra Serafino's pranks raised smiles on courtly lips; where Bernardo Accolti, "the Unique," declaimed his verses to applauding crowds? Is it possible that into yonder hall, where now the lion of S. Mark looks down alone on staring desolation, strode the Borgia in all his panoply of war, a gilded glittering dragon, and from the daïs tore the Montefeltri's throne, and from the arras stripped their ensigns, replacing these with his own Bull and Valentinus Dux? Here Tasso tuned his lyre for Francesco Maria's wedding-feast, and read "Aminta" to Lucrezia d'Este. Here Guidobaldo listened to the jests and whispered scandals of the Aretine. Here Titian set his easel up to paint; here the boy Raphael, cap in hand, took signed and sealed credentials from his Duchess to the Gonfalonier of Florence. Somewhere in these huge chambers, the courtiers sat before a torch-lit stage, when Bibbiena's "Calandria" and Castiglione's "Tirsi," with their miracles of masques and mummers, whiled the night away. Somewhere, we know not where, Giuliano de' Medici made love in these bare rooms to that mysterious mother of ill-fated Cardinal Ippolito; somewhere, in some darker nook, the bastard Alessandro sprang to his strange-fortuned life of tyranny and license, which Brutus-Lorenzino cut short with a traitor's poignard-thrust in Via Larga. How many men, illustrious for arts and letters, memorable by their virtues or their crimes, have trod these silent corridors, from the great Pope Julius



down to James III., self-titled King of England, who tarried here with Clementina Sobieski through some twelve months of his ex-royal exile! The memories of all this folk, flown guests and masters of the still-abiding palace-chambers, haunt us as we hurry through. They are but filmy shadows. We cannot grasp them, localise them, people surrounding emptiness with more than withering cobweb forms.

Death takes a stronger hold on us than bygone life. Therefore, returning to the vast Throne-room, we animate it with one scene it witnessed on an April night in 1508. Duke Guidobaldo had died at Fossombrone, repeating to his friends around his bed these lines of Virgil :

Me circum limus niger et deformis arundo  
Cocyti tardaue palus inamabilis unda  
Alligat, et novies Styx interfusa coercet.

His body had been carried on the shoulders of servants through those mountain ways at night, amid the lamentations of gathering multitudes and the baying of dogs from hill-set farms alarmed by flaring flambeaux. Now it is laid in state in the great hall. The daïs and the throne are draped in black. The arms and *bâtons* of his father hang about the doorways. His own ensigns are displayed in groups and trophies, with the banners of S. Mark, the Montefeltrian eagle, and the cross keys of S. Peter. The hall itself is vacant, save for the high-reared catafalque of sable velvet and gold damask, surrounded with wax-candles burning steadily. Round it passes a ceaseless stream of people, coming and going, gazing at their Duke. He is attired in crimson hose and doublet of black damask. Black velvet slippers are on his feet, and his ducal cap is of black velvet. The mantle of the Garter, made of dark-blue Alexandrine velvet, hooded with crimson, lined with white silk damask, and embroidered with the badge, drapes the stiff sleeping form.

It is easier to conjure up the past of this great palace, strolling round it in free air and twilight; perhaps because the landscape and the life still moving on the city streets bring its exterior into harmony with real existence. The southern façade, with its vaulted balconies and flanking towers, takes the fancy, fascinates the eye, and lends itself as a fit stage for puppets of the musing mind. Once more imagination plants trim orange-trees in giant jars of Gubbio ware upon the pavement where the garden of the Duchess lay—the pavement paced in these bad days by convicts in grey canvas jackets—that pavement where Monsignor Bembo courted “dear dead women” with Platonic phrase, smothering the Menta of his natural man in lettuce culled from Academe and thyme of Mount Hymettus. In yonder *loggia*, lifted above the garden and the court, two lovers are in earnest converse. They lean beneath the coffered arch, against the marble of the balustrade, he fingering his dagger under the dark velvet doublet, she playing with a clove carnation, deep as her own shame. The man is Giannandrea, broad-shouldered bravo of Verona, Duke Guidobaldo’s favourite and carpet-count. The lady is Madonna Maria, daughter of Rome’s Prefect, widow of Venanzio Varano, whom the Borgia strangled. On their discourse a tale will hang of woman’s frailty and man’s boldness—Camerino’s Duchess yielding to a low-born suitor’s stalwart charms. And more will follow, when that lady’s brother, furious Francesco Maria della Rovere, shall stab the bravo in torch-litten palace rooms with twenty poignard strokes twixt waist and throat, and their Pandarus shall be sent down to his account by a varlet’s *coltellata* through the midriff. Imagination shifts the scene, and shows in that same *loggia* Rome’s warlike Pope, attended by his cardinals and all Urbino’s chivalry. The snowy beard of Julius flows down upon his breast, where jewels clasp the crimson mantle, as in Raphael’s picture. His eyes are bright with wine; for he has come to gaze on sunset from

the banquet-chamber, and to watch the line of lamps which soon will leap along that palace cornice in his honour. Behind him lies Bologna humbled. The Pope returns, a conqueror, to Rome. Yet once again imagination is at work. A gaunt, bald man, close-habited in Spanish black, his spare, fine features carved in purest ivory, leans from that balcony. Gazing with hollow eyes, he tracks the swallows in their flight, and notes that winter is at hand. This is the last Duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria II., he whose young wife deserted him, who made for himself alone a hermit-pedant's round of petty cares and niggard avarice and mean-brained superstition. He drew a second consort from the convent, and raised up seed unto his line by forethought, but beheld his princeling fade untimely in the bloom of boyhood. Nothing is left but solitude. To the mortmain of the Church reverts Urbino's lordship, and even now he meditates the terms of devolution. Jesuits cluster in the rooms behind, with comfort for the ducal soul and calculations for the interests of Holy See.

A farewell to these memories of Urbino's dukedom should be taken in the crypt of the cathedral, where Francesco Maria II., the last Duke, buried his only son and all his temporal hopes. The place is scarcely solemn. Its dreary *barocco* emblems mar the dignity of death. A bulky *Pietà* by Gian Bologna, with Madonna's face unfinished, towers up and crowds the narrow cell. Religion has evanished from this late Renaissance art, nor has the after-glow of Guido Reni's hectic piety yet overflushed it. Chilled by the stifling humid sense of an extinct race here entombed in its last representative, we gladly emerge from the sepulchral vault into the air of day.

Filippo Visconti, with a smile on his handsome face, is waiting for us at the inn. His horses, sleek, well-fed, and rested, toss their heads impatiently. We take our seats in the carriage, open wide beneath a sparkling sky, whirl past the palace and its ghost-like recollections, and are half way on the

road to Fossombrone in a cloud of dust and whirr of wheels before we think of looking back to greet Urbino. There is just time. The last decisive turning lies in front. We stand bare-headed to salute the grey mass of buildings ridged along the sky. Then the open road invites us with its varied scenery and movement. From the shadowy past we drive into the world of human things, for ever changefully unchanged, unrestfully the same. This interchange between dead memories and present life is the delight of travel.



## *VITTORIA ACCORAMBONI,*

AND THE TRAGEDY OF WEBSTER.

### I.

DURING the pontificate of Gregory XIII. (1572-85), Papal authority in Rome reached its lowest point of weakness, and the ancient splendour of the Papal court was well-nigh eclipsed. Art and learning had died out. The traditions of the days of Leo, Julius, and Paul III. were forgotten. It seemed as though the genius of the Renaissance had migrated across the Alps. All the powers of the Papacy were directed to the suppression of heresies and to the re-establishment of spiritual supremacy over the intellect of Europe. Meanwhile society in Rome returned to mediæval barbarism. The veneer of classical refinement and humanistic urbanity, which for a time had hidden the natural savagery of the Roman nobles, wore away. The Holy City became a den of bandits; the territory of the Church supplied a battle-ground for senseless party strife, which the weak old man who wore the triple crown was quite unable to control. It is related how a robber chieftain, Marianazzo, refused the offer of a general pardon from the Pope, alleging that the profession of brigand was far more lucrative, and offered greater security of life, than any trade within the walls of Rome. The Campagna, the ruined citadels about the basements of the Sabine and Ciminian hills, the quarters of the aristocracy within the city, swarmed with bravos, who were protected by great nobles and fed by decent

citizens for the advantages to be derived from the assistance of abandoned and courageous ruffians. Life, indeed, had become impossible without fixed compact with the powers of lawlessness. There was hardly a family in Rome which did not number some notorious criminal among the outlaws. Murder, sacrilege, the love of adventure, thirst for plunder, poverty, hostility to the ascendant faction of the moment, were common causes of voluntary or involuntary outlawry; nor did public opinion regard a bandit's calling as other than honourable.

It may readily be imagined that in such a state of society the grisliest tragedies were common enough in Rome. The history of some of these has been preserved to us in documents digested from public trials and personal observation by contemporary writers. That of the Cenci, in which a notorious act of parricide furnished the plot of a popular novella, is well known. And such a tragedy, even more rife in characteristic incidents, and more distinguished by the quality of its *dramatis personæ*, is that of Vittoria Accoramboni.

Vittoria was born in 1557, of a noble but impoverished family, at Gubbio, among the hills of Umbria. Her biographers are rapturous in their praises of her beauty, grace, and exceeding charm of manner. Not only was her person most lovely, but her mind shone at first with all the amiable lustre of a modest, innocent, and winning youth. Her father, Claudio Accoramboni, removed to Rome, where his numerous children were brought up under the care of their mother, Tarquinia, an ambitious and unscrupulous woman, bent on rehabilitating the decayed honours of their house. Here Vittoria in early girlhood soon became the fashion. She exercised an irresistible influence over all who saw her, and many were the offers of marriage she refused. At length a suitor appeared whose condition and connection with the Roman ecclesiastical nobility rendered him acceptable in the eyes of the Accoramboni.

Francesco Peretti was welcomed as the successful candidate for Vittoria's hand. His mother, Camilla, was sister to Felice, Cardinal of Montalto; and her son, Francesco Mignucci, had changed his surname in compliment to this illustrious relative. The Peretti were of humble origin. The Cardinal himself had tended swine in his native village; but, supported by an invincible belief in his own destinies, and gifted with a powerful intellect and determined character, he passed through all grades of the Franciscan Order to its generalship, received the bishoprics of Fermo and S. Agata, and lastly, in the year 1570, assumed the scarlet with the title of Cardinal Montalto. He was now upon the high way to the Papacy, amassing money by incessant care, studying the humours of surrounding factions, effacing his own personality, and by mixing but little in the intrigues of the court, winning the reputation of a prudent, inoffensive old man. These were his tactics for securing the Papal throne; nor were his expectations frustrated; for in 1585 he was chosen Pope, the parties of the Medici and the Farnesi agreeing to accept him as a compromise. When Sixtus V. was once firmly seated on S. Peter's chair, he showed himself in his true colours. An implacable administrator of severest justice, a rigorous economist, an iconoclastic foe to paganism, the first act of his reign was to declare a war of extirpation against the bandits who had reduced Rome in his predecessor's rule to anarchy.

It was the nephew, then, of this man, whom historians have judged the greatest personage of his own times, that Vittoria Accoramboni married on the 28th of June 1573. For a short while the young couple lived happily together. According to some accounts of their married life, the bride secured the favour of her powerful uncle-in-law, who indulged her costly fancies to the full. It is, however, more probable that the Cardinal Montalto treated her follies with a grudging parsimony; for we soon find the Peretti household hopelessly

involved in debt. Discord, too, arose between Vittoria and her husband on the score of a certain levity in her behaviour; and it was rumoured that even during the brief space of their union she had proved a faithless wife. Yet she contrived to keep Francesco's confidence, and it is certain that her family profited by their connection with the Peretti. Of her six brothers, Mario, the eldest, was a favourite courtier of the great Cardinal d'Este. Ottavio was in orders, and through Montalto's influence obtained the See of Fossombrone. The same eminent protector placed Scipione in the service of the Cardinal Sforza. Camillo, famous for his beauty and his courage, followed the fortunes of Filibert of Savoy, and died in France. Flaminio was still a boy, dependent, as the sequel of this story shows, upon his sister's destiny. Of Marcello, the second in age and most important in the action of this tragedy, it is needful to speak with more particularity. He was young, and, like the rest of his breed, singularly handsome—so handsome, indeed, that he is said to have gained an infamous ascendancy over the great Duke of Bracciano, whose privy chamberlain he had become. Marcello was an outlaw for the murder of Matteo Pallavicino, the brother of the Cardinal of that name. This did not, however, prevent the chief of the Orsini house from making him his favourite and confidential friend. Marcello, who seems to have realised in actual life the worst vices of those Roman courtiers described for us by Aretino, very soon conceived the plan of exalting his own fortunes by trading on his sister's beauty. He worked upon the Duke of Bracciano's mind so cleverly, that he brought this haughty prince to the point of an insane passion for Peretti's young wife; and meanwhile so contrived to inflame the ambition of Vittoria and her mother, Tarquinia, that both were prepared to dare the worst of crimes in expectation of a dukedom. The game was a difficult one to play. Not only had Francesco



Peretti first to be murdered, but the inequality of birth and wealth and station between Vittoria and the Duke of Bracciano rendered a marriage almost impossible. It was also an affair of delicacy to stimulate without satisfying the Duke's passion. Yet Marcello did not despair. The stakes were high enough to justify great risks; and all he put in peril was his sister's honour, the fame of the Accoramboni, and the favour of Montalto. Vittoria, for her part, trusted in her power to ensnare and secure the noble prey both had in view.

Paolo Giordano Orsini, born about the year 1537, was reigning Duke of Bracciano. Among Italian princes he ranked at least upon a par with the Dukes of Urbino, and his family, by its alliances, was more illustrious than any of that time in Italy. He was a man of gigantic stature, prodigious corpulence, and marked personal daring; agreeable in manners, but subject to uncontrollable fits of passion, and incapable of self-restraint when crossed in any whim or fancy. Upon the habit of his body it is needful to insist, in order that the part he played in this tragedy of intrigue, crime, and passion may be well defined. He found it difficult to procure a charger equal to his weight, and he was so fat that a special dispensation relieved him from the duty of genuflexion in the Papal presence. Though lord of a large territory, yielding princely revenues, he laboured under heavy debts; for no great noble of the period lived more splendidly, with less regard for his finances. In the politics of that age and country, Paolo Giordano leaned toward France. Yet he was a grandée of Spain, and had played a distinguished part in the battle of Lepanto. Now the Duke of Bracciano was a widower. He had been married in 1553 to Isabella de' Medici, daughter of the Grand Duke Cosimo, sister of Francesco, Bianca Capello's lover, and of the Cardinal Ferdinando. Suspicion of adultery with Troilo Orsini had fallen on Isabella, and her husband, with the full concurrence

of her brothers, removed her in 1576 from this world.\* No one thought the worse of Bracciano for this murder of his wife. In those days of abandoned vice and intricate villany, certain points of honour were maintained with scrupulous fidelity. A wife's adultery was enough to justify the most savage and licentious husband in an act of semi-judicial vengeance; and the shame she brought upon his head was shared by the members of her own house, so that they stood by, consenting to her death. Isabella, it may be said, left one son, Virginio, who became in due time Duke of Bracciano.

It appears that in the year 1581, four years after Vittoria's marriage, the Duke of Bracciano had satisfied Marcello of his intention to make her his wife, and of his willingness to countenance Francesco Peretti's murder. Marcello, feeling sure of his game, introduced the Duke in private to his sister, and induced her to overcome any natural repugnance she may have felt for the unwieldy and gross lover. Having reached this point, it was imperative to push matters quickly on toward matrimony.

But how should the unfortunate Francesco be entrapped? They caught him in a snare of peculiar atrocity, by working on the kindly feelings which his love for Vittoria had caused him to extend to all the Accoramboni. Marcello, the outlaw, was her favourite brother, and Marcello at that time lay in hiding, under the suspicion of more than ordinary crime, beyond the walls of Rome. Late in the evening of the 18th of April, while the Peretti family were retiring to bed, a messenger from Marcello arrived, entreating Francesco to repair at once to Monte Cavallo. Marcello had affairs of the utmost importance to communicate, and begged his brother-in-law

\* The balance of probability leans against Isabella in this affair. At the licentious court of the Medici she lived with unpardonable freedom. Troilo Orsini was himself assassinated in Paris by Bracciano's orders a few years afterwards.

not to fail him at a grievous pinch. The letter containing this request was borne by one Dominico d'Aquaviva, *alias* Il Mancino, a confederate of Vittoria's waiting-maid. This fellow, like Marcello, was an outlaw; but when he ventured into Rome he frequented Peretti's house, and had made himself familiar with its master as a trusty bravo. Neither in the message, therefore, nor in the messenger was there much to rouse suspicion. The time, indeed, was oddly chosen, and Marcello had never made a similar appeal on any previous occasion. Yet his necessities might surely have obliged him to demand some more than ordinary favour from a brother. Francesco immediately made himself ready to set out, armed only with his sword and attended by a single servant. It was in vain that his wife and his mother reminded him of the dangers of the night, the loneliness of Monte Cavallo, its ruinous palaces and robber-haunted caves. He was resolved to undertake the adventure, and went forth, never to return. As he ascended the hill, he fell to earth, shot with three harquebusses. His body was afterwards found on Monte Cavallo, stabbed through and through, without a trace that could identify the murderers. Only, in the course of subsequent investigations, Il Mancino (on the 24th of February 1582) made the following statements:—That Vittoria's mother, assisted by the waiting woman, had planned the trap; that Marchionne of Gubbio and Paolo Barca of Bracciano, two of the Duke's men, had dispatched the victim. Marcello himself, it seems, had come from Bracciano to conduct the whole affair. Suspicion fell immediately upon Vittoria and her kindred, together with the Duke of Bracciano; nor was this diminished when the Accoramboni, fearing the pursuit of justice, took refuge in a villa of the Duke's at Magnanapoli a few days after the murder.

A cardinal's nephew, even in those troublous times, was not killed without some noise being made about the matter.

Accordingly, Pope Gregory XIII. began to take measures for discovering the authors of the crime. Strange to say, however, the Cardinal Montalto, notwithstanding the great love he was known to bear his nephew, begged that the investigation might be dropped. The coolness with which he first received the news of Francesco Peretti's death, the dissimulation with which he met the Pope's expression of sympathy in a full consistory, his reserve in greeting friends on ceremonial visits of condolence, and, more than all, the self-restraint he showed in the presence of the Duke of Bracciano, impressed the society of Rome with the belief that he was of a singularly moderate and patient temper. It was thought that the man who could so tamely submit to his nephew's murder, and suspend the arm of justice when already raised for vengeance, must prove a mild and indulgent ruler. When, therefore, in the fifth year after this event, Montalto was elected Pope, men ascribed his elevation in no small measure to his conduct at the present crisis. Some, indeed, attributed his extraordinary moderation and self-control to the right cause. "*Veramente costui è un gran frate!*" was Gregory's remark at the close of the consistory when Montalto begged him to let the matter of Peretti's murder rest. "*Of a truth, that fellow is a consummate hypocrite!*" How accurate this judgment was, appeared when Sixtus V. assumed the reins of power. The same man who, as monk and cardinal, had smiled on Bracciano, though he knew him to be his nephew's assassin, now, as Pontiff and sovereign, bade the chief of the Orsini purge his palace and dominions of the scoundrels he was wont to harbour, adding significantly, that if Felice Peretti forgave what had been done against him in a private station, he would exact uttermost vengeance for disobedience to the will of Sixtus. The Duke of Bracciano judged it best, after that warning, to withdraw from Rome.

Francesco Peretti had been murdered on the 16th of April



1581. Sixtus V. was proclaimed on the 24th of April 1585. In this interval Vittoria underwent a series of extraordinary perils and adventures. First of all, she had been secretly married to the Duke in his gardens of Magnanapoli at the end of April 1581. That is to say, Marcello and she secured their prize, as well as they were able, the moment after Francesco had been removed by murder. But no sooner had the marriage become known, than the Pope, moved by the scandal it created, no less than by the urgent instance of the Orsini and Medici, declared it void. After some while spent in vain resistance, Bracciano submitted, and sent Vittoria back to her father's house. By an order issued under Gregory's own hand, she was next removed to the prison of Corte Savella, thence to the monastery of S. Cecilia in Trastevere, and finally to the Castle of S. Angelo. Here, at the end of December 1581, she was put on trial for the murder of her first husband. In prison she seems to have borne herself bravely, arraying her beautiful person in delicate attire, entertaining visitors, exacting from her friends the honours due to a duchess, and sustaining the frequent examinations to which she was submitted with a bold, proud front. In the middle of the month of July her constancy was sorely tried by the receipt of a letter in the Duke's own handwriting, formally renouncing his marriage. It was only by a lucky accident that she was prevented on this occasion from committing suicide. The Papal court meanwhile kept urging her either to retire to a monastery or to accept another husband. She firmly refused to embrace the religious life, and declared that she was already lawfully united to a living husband, the Duke of Bracciano. It seemed impossible to deal with her; and at last, on the 8th of November, she was released from prison under the condition of retirement to Gubbio. The Duke had lulled his enemies to rest by the pretence of yielding to their wishes. But Marcello was con-

tinually beside him at Bracciano, where we read of a mysterious Greek enchantress whom he hired to brew love-philters for the furtherance of his ambitious plots. Whether Bracciano was stimulated by the brother's arguments or by the witch's potions need not be too curiously questioned. But it seems in any case certain that absence inflamed his passion instead of cooling it.

Accordingly, in September 1583, under the excuse of a pilgrimage to Loreto, he contrived to meet Vittoria at Trevi, whence he carried her in triumph to Bracciano. Here he openly acknowledged her as his wife, installing her with all the splendour due to a sovereign duchess. On the 10th of October following, he once more performed the marriage ceremony in the principal church of his fief; and in the January of 1584 he brought her openly to Rome. This act of contumacy to the Pope, both as feudal superior and as supreme Pontiff, roused all the former opposition to his marriage. Once more it was declared invalid. Once more the Duke pretended to give way. But at this juncture Gregory died; and while the conclave was sitting for the election of the new Pope, he resolved to take the law into his own hands, and to ratify his union with Vittoria by a third and public marriage in Rome. On the morning of the 24th of April 1585, their nuptials were accordingly once more solemnised in the Orsini palace. Just one hour after the ceremony, as appears from the marriage-register, the news arrived of Cardinal Montalto's election to the Papacy. Vittoria lost no time in paying her respects to Camilla, sister of the new Pope, her former mother-in-law. The Duke visited Sixtus V. in state to compliment him on his elevation. But the reception which both received proved that Rome was no safe place for them to live in. They consequently made up their minds for flight.

A chronic illness from which Bracciano had lately suffered

furnished a sufficient pretext. This seems to have been something of the nature of a cancerous ulcer, which had to be treated by the application of raw meat to open sores. Such details are only excusable in the present narrative on the ground that Bracciano's disease considerably affects our moral judgment of the woman who could marry a man thus physically tainted, and with her husband's blood upon his hands. At any rate, the Duke's *lupa* justified his trying what change of air, together with the sulphur waters of Abano, would do for him.

The Duke and Duchess arrived in safety at Venice, where they had engaged the Dandolo palace on the Zuecca. There they only stayed a few days, removing to Padua, where they had hired palaces of the Foscari in the Arena and a house called De' Cavalli. At Salò, also, on the Lake of Garda, they provided themselves with fit dwellings for their princely state and their large retinues, intending to divide their time between the pleasures which the capital of luxury afforded and the simpler enjoyments of the most beautiful of the Italian lakes. But *la gioia dei profani è un fumo passegger*. Paolo Giordano Orsini, Duke of Bracciano, died suddenly at Salò on the 10th November 1585, leaving the young and beautiful Vittoria helpless among enemies. What was the cause of his death? It is not possible to give a clear and certain answer. We have seen that he suffered from a horrible and voracious disease, which after his removal from Rome seems to have made progress. Yet though this malady may well have cut his life short, suspicion of poison was not, in the circumstances, quite unreasonable. The Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Pope, and the Orsini family were all interested in his death. Anyhow, he had time to make a will in Vittoria's favour, leaving her large sums of money, jewels, goods and houses—enough, in fact, to support her ducal dignity with splendour. His hereditary fiefs and honours passed by right to his only son, Virginio.

Vittoria, accompanied by her brother, Marcello, and the whole court of Bracciano, repaired at once to Padua, where she was soon after joined by Flaminio, and by the Prince Lodovico Orsini. Lodovico Orsini assumed the duty of settling Vittoria's affairs under her dead husband's will. In life he had been the Duke's ally as well as relative. His family pride was deeply wounded by what seemed to him an ignoble, as it was certainly an unequal, marriage. He now showed himself the relentless enemy of the Duchess. Disputes arose between them as to certain details, which seem to have been legally decided in the widow's favour. On the night of December 22, however, forty men disguised in black and fantastically tricked out to elude detection, surrounded her palace. Through the long galleries and chambers hung with arras, eight of them went, bearing torches, in search of Vittoria and her brothers. Marcello escaped, having fled the house under suspicion of the murder of one of his own followers. Flaminio, the innocent and young, was playing on his lute and singing *Miserere* in the great hall of the palace. The murderers surprised him with a shot from one of their harquebusses. He ran, wounded in the shoulder, to his sister's room. She, it is said, was telling her beads before retiring for the night. When three of the assassins entered, she knelt before the crucifix, and there they stabbed her in the left breast, turning the poignard in the wound, and asking her with savage insults if her heart was pierced. Her last words were, "Jesus, I pardon you." Then they turned to Flaminio, and left him pierced with seventy-four stiletto wounds.

The authorities of Padua identified the bodies of Vittoria and Flaminio, and sent at once for further instructions to Venice. Meanwhile it appears that both corpses were laid out in one open coffin for the people to contemplate. The palace and the church of the Eremitani, to which they had been removed, were crowded all through the following day



with a vast concourse of the Paduans. Vittoria's wonderful dead body, pale yet sweet to look upon, the golden hair flowing around her marble shoulders, the red wound in her breast uncovered, the stately limbs arrayed in satin as she died, maddened the populace with its surpassing loveliness. "*Dentibus fremebant*," says the chronicler, when they beheld that gracious lady stiff in death. And of a truth, if her corpse was actually exposed in the chapel of the Eremitani, as we have some right to assume, the spectacle must have been impressive. Those grim gaunt frescoes of Mantegna looked down on her as she lay stretched upon her bier, solemn and calm, and, but for pallor, beautiful as though in life. No wonder that the folk forgot her first husband's murder, her less than comely marriage to the second. It was enough for them that this flower of surpassing loveliness had been cropped by villains in its bloom. Gathering in knots around the torches placed beside the corpse, they vowed vengeance against the Orsini; for suspicion, not unnaturally, fell on Prince Lodovico.

The Prince was arrested and interrogated before the court of Padua. He entered their hall attended by forty armed men, responded haughtily to their questions, and demanded free passage for his courier to Virginio Orsini, then at Florence. To this demand the court acceded; but the precaution of waylaying the courier and searching his person was very wisely taken. Besides some formal dispatches which announced Vittoria's assassination, they found in this man's boot a compromising letter, declaring Virginio a party to the crime, and asserting that Lodovico had with his own poignard killed their victim. Padua placed itself in a state of defence, and prepared to besiege the palace of Prince Lodovico, who also got himself in readiness for battle. Engines, culverins, and fire-brands were directed against the barricades which he had raised. The militia was called out and the Brenta was strongly guarded. Meanwhile the Senate of S. Mark had

dispatched the Avogadore, Aloisio Bragadin, with full power to the scene of action. Lodovico Orsini, it may be mentioned, was in their service ; and had not this affair intervened, he would in a few weeks have entered on his duties as Governor for Venice of Corfu.

The bombardment of Orsini's palace began on Christmas Day. Three of the Prince's men were killed in the first assault ; and since the artillery brought to bear upon him threatened speedy ruin to the house and its inhabitants, he made up his mind to surrender. "The Prince Luigi," writes one chronicler of these events, "walked attired in brown, his poignard at his side, and his cloak slung elegantly under his arm. The weapon being taken from him, he leaned upon a balustrade, and began to trim his nails with a little pair of scissors he happened to find there." On the 27th he was strangled in prison by order of the Venetian Republic. His body was carried to be buried, according to his own will, in the church of S. Maria dell' Orto at Venice. Two of his followers were hung next day. Fifteen were executed on the following Monday ; two of these were quartered alive ; one of them, the Conte Paganello, who confessed to having slain Vittoria, had his left side probed with his own cruel dagger. Eight were condemned to the galleys, six to prison, and eleven were acquitted. Thus ended this terrible affair, which brought, it is said, good credit and renown to the lords of Venice through all nations of the civilised world. It only remains to be added that Marcello Accoramboni was surrendered to the Pope's vengeance and beheaded at Ancona, where also his mysterious accomplice, the Greek sorceress, perished.

## II.

This story of Vittoria Accoramboni's life and tragic ending is drawn, in its main details, from a narrative published by Henri Beyle in his *Chroniques et Nouvelles*.\* He professes to have translated it literally from a MS. communicated to him by a nobleman of Mantua; and there are strong internal evidences of the truth of this assertion. Such compositions are frequent in Italian libraries, nor is it rare for one of them to pass into the common market—as Mr. Browning's famous purchase of the tale on which he based his *Ring and the Book* sufficiently proves. These pamphlets were produced, in the first instance, to gratify the curiosity of the educated public in an age which had no newspapers, and also to preserve the memory of famous trials. How far the strict truth was represented, or whether, as in the case of Beatrice Cenci, the pathetic aspect of the tragedy was unduly dwelt on, depended, of course, upon the mental bias of the scribe, upon his opportunities of obtaining exact information, and upon the taste of the audience for whom he wrote. Therefore, in treating such documents as historical data, we must be upon our guard. Professor Gnoli who has recently investigated the whole of Vittoria's eventful story by the light of contemporary documents, informs us that several narratives exist in MS., all dealing more or less accurately with the details of the tragedy. One of these was published in Italian at Brescia in 1586. A Frenchman, De Rosset, printed the same story in its main outlines at Lyons in 1621. Our own dramatist, John Webster, made it the subject of a tragedy, which he gave to the press in 1612. What were his sources of information we

\* I have amplified and corrected this chronicle by the light of Professor Gnoli's monograph, *Vittoria Accoramboni*, published by Le Monnier at Florence in 1870.

do not know for certain. But it is clear that he was well acquainted with the history. He has changed some of the names and redistributed some of the chief parts. Vittoria's first husband, for example, becomes Camillo; her mother, named Cornelia instead of Tarquinia, is so far from abetting Peretti's murder and countenancing her daughter's shame, that she acts the rôle of a domestic Cassandra. Flaminio and not Marcello is made the main instrument of Vittoria's crime and elevation. The Cardinal Montalto, is called Monticelso, and his papal title is Paul IV. instead of Sixtus V. These are details of comparative indifference, in which a playwright may fairly use his liberty of art. On the other hand, Webster shows a curious knowledge of the picturesque circumstances of the tale. The garden in which Vittoria meets Bracciano is the villa of Magnanapoli; Zanche, the Moorish slave, combines Vittoria's waiting-woman, Caterina, and the Greek sorceress who so mysteriously dogged Marcello's footsteps to the death. The suspicion of Bracciano's murder is used to introduce a quaint episode of Italian poisoning.

Webster exercised the dramatist's privilege of connecting various threads of action in one plot, disregarding chronology, and hazarding an ethical solution of motives which mere fidelity to fact hardly warrants. He shows us Vittoria married to Camillo, a low-born and witless fool, whose only merit consists in being nephew to the Cardinal Monticelso, afterwards Pope Paul IV.\* Paulo Giordano Ursini, Duke of Brachiano, loves Vittoria, and she suggests to him that, for the furtherance of their amours, his wife, the Duchess Isabella, sister to Francesco de' Medici, Grand Duke of Florence, should be murdered at the same time as her own husband, Camillo. Brachiano is struck by this plan, and with the help of Vittoria's brother, Flamineo, he puts it at once into execution. Flam-

\* In dealing with Webster's tragedy, I have adhered to his use and spelling of names.



ineo hires a doctor who poisons Brachiano's portrait, so that Isabella dies after kissing it. He also with his own hands twists Camillo's neck during a vaulting-match, making it appear that he came by his death accidentally. Suspicion of the murder attaches, however, to Vittoria. She is tried for her life before Monticelso and De' Medici; acquitted, and relegated to a house of Convertites or female reformatory. Brachiano, on the accession of Menticelso to the Papal throne, resolves to leave Rome with Vittoria. They escape, together with her mother Cornelia, and her brothers Flamineo and Marcello, to Padua; and it is here that the last scenes of the tragedy are laid.

The use Webster made of Lodovico Orsini deserves particular attention. He introduces this personage in the very first scene as a spendthrift, who, having run through his fortune, has been outlawed. Count Lodovico, as he is always called, has no relationship with the Orsini, but is attached to the service of Francesco de' Medici, and is an old lover of the Duchess Isabella. When, therefore, the Grand Duke meditates vengeance on Brachiano, he finds a fitting instrument in the desperate Lodovico. Together, in disguise, they repair to Padua. Lodovico poisons the Duke of Brachiano's helmet, and has the satisfaction of ending his last struggles by the halter. Afterwards, with companions, habited as a masquer, he enters Vittoria's palace and puts her to death together with her brother Flamineo. Just when the deed of vengeance has been completed, young Giovanni Orsini, heir of Brachiano, enters and orders the summary execution of Lodovico for this deed of violence. Webster's invention in this plot is confined to the fantastic incidents attending on the deaths of Isabella, Camillo, and Brachiano, and to the murder of Marcello by his brother Flamineo, with the further consequence of Cornelia's madness and death. He has heightened our interest in Isabella, at the expense of Brachiano's character,

by making her an innocent and loving wife instead of an adulteress. He has ascribed different motives from the real ones to Lodovico in order to bring this personage into rank with the chief actors, though this has been achieved with only moderate success. Vittoria is abandoned to the darkest interpretation. She is a woman who rises to eminence by crime, as an unfaithful wife, the murderess of her husband, and an impudent defier of justice. Her brother, Flamineo, becomes under Webster's treatment one of those worst human infamies—a court dependant; ruffian, buffoon, pimp, murderer by turns. Furthermore, and without any adequate object beyond that of completing this study of a type he loved, Webster makes him murder his own brother Marcello by treason. The part assigned to Marcello, it should be said, is a genial and happy one; and Cornelia, the mother of the Accoramboni, is a dignified character, pathetic in her suffering. Webster, it may be added, treats the Cardinal Monticelso as allied in some special way to the Medici. Yet certain traits in his character, especially his avoidance of bloodshed and the tameness of his temper after Camillo has been murdered, seem to have been studied from the historical Sixtus.

### III.

The character of the "White Devil, or Vittoria Corombona," is perhaps the most masterly creation of Webster's genius. Though her history is a true one in its leading incidents, the poet, while portraying a real personage, has conceived an original individuality. It is impossible to know for certain how far the actual Vittoria was guilty of her first husband's murder. Her personality fails to detach itself from the romance of her biography by any salient qualities. But Webster, with true playwright's instinct, casts aside historical doubts, and delineates in his heroine a woman of a very

marked and terrible nature. Hard as adamant, uncompromising, ruthless, Vittoria follows ambition as the loadstar of her life. It is the ambition to reign as Duchess, far more than any passion for a paramour, which makes her plot Camillo's and Isabella's murders, and throws her before marriage into Brachiano's arms. Added to this ambition, she is possessed with the cold demon of her own imperial and victorious beauty. She has the courage of her criminality in the fullest sense; and much of the fascination with which Webster has invested her, depends upon her dreadful daring. Her portrait is drawn with full and firm touches. Although she appears but five times on the scene, she fills it from the first line of the drama to the last. Each appearance adds effectively to the total impression. We see her first during a criminal interview with Brachiano, contrived by her brother Flamineo. The plot of the tragedy is developed in this scene; Vittoria suggesting, under the metaphor of a dream, that her lover should compass the deaths of his duchess and her husband. The dream is told with deadly energy and ghastly picturesqueness. The cruel sneer at its conclusion, murmured by a voluptuous woman in the ears of an impassioned paramour, chills us with the sense of concentrated vice. Her next appearance is before the court, on trial for her husband's murder. The scene is celebrated, and has been much disputed by critics. Relying on her own dauntlessness, on her beauty, and on the protection of Brachiano, Vittoria hardly takes the trouble to plead innocence or to rebut charges. She stands defiant, arrogant, vigilant, on guard; flinging the lie in the teeth of her arraigners; quick to seize the slightest sign of feebleness in their attack; protesting her guiltlessness so loudly that she shouts truth down by brazen strength of lung; retiring at the close with taunts; blazing throughout with the intolerable lustre of some baleful planet. When she enters for the third time, it is to quarrel with her

paramour. He has been stung to jealousy by a feigned love-letter. She knows that she has given him no cause; it is her game to lure him by fidelity to marriage. Therefore she resolves to make his mistake the instrument of her exaltation. Beginning with torrents of abuse, hurling reproaches at him for her own dishonour and the murder of his wife, working herself by studied degrees into a tempest of ungovernable rage, she flings herself upon the bed, refuses his caresses, spurns and tramples on him, till she has brought Brachiano, terrified, humbled, fascinated, to her feet. Then she gradually relents beneath his passionate protestations and repeated promises of marriage. At this point she speaks but little. We only feel her melting humour in the air, and long to see the scene played by such an actress as Madame Bernhardt. When Vittoria next appears, it is as Duchess by the deathbed of the Duke, her husband. Her attendance here is necessary, but it contributes little to the development of her character. We have learned to know her, and expect neither womanish tears nor signs of affection at a crisis which touches her heart less than her self-love. Webster, among his other excellent qualities, knew how to support character by reticence. Vittoria's silence in this act is significant; and when she retires exclaiming, "O me! this place is hell!" we know that it is the outcry, not of a woman who has lost what made life dear, but of one who sees the fruits of crime imperilled by a fatal accident. The last scene of the play is devoted to Vittoria. It begins with a notable altercation between her and Flamineo. She calls him "ruffian" and "villain," refusing him the reward of his vile service. This quarrel emerges in one of Webster's grotesque contrivances to prolong a poignant situation. Flamineo quits the stage and reappears with pistols. He affects a kind of madness; and after threatening Vittoria, who never flinches, he proposes they should end their lives by suicide. She humours him,



but manages to get the first shot. Flamineo falls, wounded apparently to death. Then Vittoria turns and tramples on him with her feet and tongue, taunting him in his death agony with the enumeration of his crimes. Her malice and her energy are equally infernal. Soon, however, it appears that the whole device was but a trick of Flamineo's to test his sister. The pistol was not loaded. He now produces a pair which are properly charged, and proceeds in good earnest to the assassination of Vittoria. But at this critical moment Lodovico and his masquers appear; brother and sister both die unrepentant, defiant to the end. Vittoria's customary pride and her familiar sneers impress her speech in these last moments with a trenchant truth to nature :

*You my death's-man !*

Methinks thou dost not look horrid enough,  
Thou hast too good a face to be a hangman :  
If thou be, do thy office in right form ;  
Fall down upon thy knees, and ask forgiveness !

I will be waited on in death ; my servant  
Shall never go before me.

*Yes, I shall welcome death*

As princes do some great ambassadors :  
I'll meet thy weapon half-way.

*'Twas a manly blow !*

The next thou giv'st, murder some sucking infant ;  
And then thou wilt be famous.

So firmly has Webster wrought the character of this white devil, that we seem to see her before us as in a picture. "Beautiful as the leprosy, dazzling as the lightning," to use a phrase of her enthusiastic admirer Hazlitt, she takes her station like a lady in some portrait by Paris Bordone, with gleaming golden hair twisted into snakelike braids about her temples, with skin white as cream, bright cheeks, dark dauntless eyes, and on her bosom, where it has been chafed by

jewelled chains, a flush of rose. She is luxurious, but not so abandoned to the pleasures of the sense as to forget the purpose of her will and brain. Crime and peril add zest to her enjoyment. When arraigned in open court before the judgment-seat of deadly and unscrupulous foes, she conceals the consciousness of guilt, and stands erect, with fierce front, unabashed, relying on the splendour of her irresistible beauty and the subtlety of her piercing wit. Chafing with rage, the blood mounts and adds a lustre to her cheek. It is no flush of modesty, but of rebellious indignation. The Cardinal, who hates her, brands her emotion with the name of shame. She rebukes him, hurling a jibe at his own mother. And when they point with spiteful eagerness to the jewels blazing on her breast, to the silks and satins that she rustles in, her husband lying murdered, she retorts :

Had I foreknown his death, as you suggest,  
I would have bespoke my mourning.

She is condemned, but not vanquished, and leaves the court with a stinging sarcasm. They send her to a house of Convertites :

*V. C.* A house of Convertites ! what's that ?

*M.* A house of penitent whores.

*V. C.* Do the noblemen of Rome

Erect it for their wives, that I am sent

To lodge there ?

Charles Lamb was certainly in error when he described Vittoria's attitude as one of "innocence-resembling boldness." In the trial scene, no less than in the scenes of altercation with Brachiano and Flamineo, Webster clearly intended her to pass for a magnificent vixen, a beautiful and queenly termagant. Her boldness is the audacity of impudence, which does not condescend to entertain the thought of guilt. Her egotism is so hard and so profound that the very victims whom she sacrifices to ambition seem in her sight justly

punished. Of Camillo and Isabella, her husband and his wife, she says to Brachiano :

And both were struck dead by that sacred yew,  
In that base shallow grave that was their due.

#### IV.

It is tempting to pass from this analysis of Vittoria's character to a consideration of Webster's drama as a whole, especially in a book dedicated to Italian byways. For that mysterious man of genius had explored the dark and devious paths of Renaissance vice, and had penetrated the secrets of Italian wickedness with truly appalling lucidity. His tragedies, though worthless as historical documents, have singular value as commentaries upon history, as revelations to us of the spirit of the sixteenth century in its deepest gloom.

Webster's plays, owing to the condensation of their thought and the compression of their style, are not easy to read for the first time. He crowds so many fantastic incidents into one action, and burdens his discourse with so much profoundly studied matter, that we rise from the perusal of his works with a blurred impression of the fables, a deep sense of the poet's power and personality, and an ineffaceable recollection of one or two resplendent scenes. His Roman history-play of *Appius and Virginia* proves that he understood the value of a simple plot, and that he was able, when he chose, to work one out with conscientious calmness. But the two Italian dramas upon which his fame is justly founded, by right of which he stands alone among the playwrights of all literatures, are marked by a peculiar and wayward mannerism. Each part is etched with equal effort after luminous effect upon a background of lurid darkness; and the whole play is made up of these parts, without due concentration on a master-motive. The characters are definite in outline, but, taken together in

the conduct of a single plot, they seem to stand apart, like figures in a *tableau vivant*; nor do they act and react each upon the other in the play of interpenetrative passions. That this mannerism was deliberately chosen, we have a right to believe. "Willingly, and not ignorantly, in this kind have I faulted," is the answer Webster gives to such as may object that he has not constructed his plays upon the classic model. He seems to have had a certain sombre richness of tone and intricacy of design in view, combining sensational effect and sententious pregnancy of diction in works of laboured art, which, when adequately represented to the ear and eye upon the stage, might at a touch obtain the animation they now lack for chamber-students.

When familiarity has brought us acquainted with his style, when we have disentangled the main characters and circumstances from their adjuncts, we perceive that he treats poignant and tremendous situations with a concentrated vigour special to his genius; that he has studied each word and trait of character, and that he has prepared by gradual approaches and degrees of horror for the culmination of his tragedies. The sentences which seem at first sight copied from a commonplace book, are found to be appropriate. Brief lightning flashes of acute perception illuminate the midnight darkness of his all but unimaginably depraved characters. Sharp unexpected touches evoke humanity in the *fantoccini* of his wayward art. No dramatist has shown more consummate ability in heightening terrific effects, in laying bare the innermost mysteries of crime, remorse, and pain, combined to make men miserable. It has been said of Webster that, feeling himself deficient in the first poetic qualities, he concentrated his powers upon one point, and achieved success by sheer force of self-cultivation. There is perhaps some truth in this. At any rate, his genius was of a narrow and peculiar order, and he knew well how to make the most of its limitations. Yet we must not forget that



he felt a natural bias toward the dreadful stuff with which he deals. The mystery of iniquity had an irresistible attraction for his mind. He was drawn to comprehend and reproduce abnormal elements of spiritual anguish. The materials with which he builds his tragedies are sought for in the ruined places of lost souls, in the agonies of madness and despair, in the sarcasms of criminal and reckless atheism, in slow tortures, griefs beyond endurance, the tempests of remorseful death, the spasms of fratricidal bloodshed. He is often melodramatic in the means employed to bring these psychological conditions home to us. He makes too free use of poisoned engines, daggers, pistols, disguised murderers, and so forth. Yet his firm grasp upon the essential qualities of diseased and guilty human nature saves him, even at his wildest, from the unrealities and extravagances into which less potent artists of the *drame sanglant*—Marston, for example—blundered.

With Webster, the tendency to brood on horrors was no result of calculation. It belonged to his idiosyncrasy. He seems to have been suckled from birth at the breast of that *Mater Tenebrarum*, our Lady of Darkness, whom De Quincey in one of his *Suspiria de Profundis* describes among the Semnai Theai, the august goddesses, the mysterious foster-nurses of suffering humanity. He cannot say the simplest thing without giving it a ghastly or sinister turn. If one of his characters draws a metaphor from pie-crust, he must needs use language of the churchyard :

You speak as if a man  
Should know what fowl is confined in a baked meat  
Afore you cut it open.

Hideous similes are heaped together in illustration of the commonest circumstances :

Places at court are but like beds in the hospital, where this man's head lies at that man's foot, and so lower and lower.

When knaves come to preferment, they rise as gallowses are raised in the Low Countries, one upon another's shoulders.

I would sooner eat a dead pigeon taken from the soles of the feet of one sick of the plague than kiss one of you fasting.

A soldier is twitted with serving his master :

As witches do their serviceable spirits,  
Even with thy prodigal blood.

An adulterous couple get this curse :

Like mistletoe on sear elms spent by weather,  
Let him cleave to her, and both rot together.

A bravo is asked :

Dost thou imagine thou canst slide on blood,  
And not be tainted with a shameful fall ?  
Or, like the black and melancholic yew-tree,  
Dost think to root thyself in dead men's graves,  
And yet to prosper ?

It is dangerous to extract philosophy of life from any dramatist. Yet Webster so often returns to dark and doleful meditations, that we may fairly class him among constitutional pessimists. Men, according to the grimness of his melancholy, are :

Only like dead walls or vaulted graves,  
That, ruined, yield no echo.

O this gloomy world !  
In what a shadow or deep pit of darkness  
Doth womanish and fearful mankind live !  
. . . . .

We are merely the stars' tennis-balls, struck and banded  
Which way please them.  
. . . . .

Pleasure of life ! what is't ? only the good hours of an age.

A Duchess is "brought to mortification," before her strangling by the executioner, in this high fantastical oration :

Thou art a box of worm-seed, at best but a salvatory of green mummy.  
What's this flesh? A little crudded milk, fantastical puff-paste, &c., &c.

Man's life in its totality is summed up with monastic cynicism  
in these lyric verses :

Of what is't fools make such vain keeping?  
Sin their conception, their birth weeping,  
Their life a general mist of error,  
Their death a hideous storm of terror.

The greatness of the world passes by with all its glory :

Vain the ambition of kings,  
Who seek by trophies and dead things  
To leave a living name behind,  
And weave but nets to catch the wind.

It would be easy to surfeit criticism with similar examples ;  
where Webster is writing in sarcastic, meditative, or deliberately  
terror-stirring moods. The same dark dye of his imagination  
shows itself even more significantly in circumstances where,  
in the work of any other artist, it would inevitably mar the  
harmony of the picture. A lady, to select one instance,  
encourages her lover to embrace her at the moment of his  
happiness. She cries :

Sir, be confident !  
What is't distracts you? This is flesh and blood, sir ;  
'Tis not the figure cut in alabaster,  
Kneels at my husband's tomb.

Yet so sustained is Webster's symphony of sombre tints, that  
we do not feel this sepulchral language, this "talk fit for a  
charnel" (to use one of his own phrases), to be out of keeping.  
It sounds like a presentiment of coming woes, which, as the  
drama grows to its conclusion, gather and darken on the  
wretched victims of his bloody plot.

It was with profound sagacity, or led by some deep-rooted

instinct, that Webster sought the fables of his two great tragedies, "The White Devil" and "The Duchess of Malfi," in Italian annals. Whether he had visited Italy in his youth, we cannot say; for next to nothing is known about Webster's life. But that he had gazed long and earnestly into the mirror held up by that enchantress of the nations in his age, is certain. Aghast and fascinated by the sins he saw there flaunting in the light of day—sins on whose pernicious glamour Ascham, Greene, and Howell have insisted with impressive vehemence—Webster discerned in them the stuff he needed for philosophy and art. Withdrawing from that contemplation, he was like a spirit "loosed out of hell to speak of horrors." Deeper than any poet of the time, deeper than any even of the Italians, he read the riddle of the sphinx of crime. He found there something akin to his own imaginative mood, something which he alone could fully comprehend and interpret. From the superficial narratives of writers like Bandello he extracted a spiritual essence which was, if not the literal, at least the ideal, truth involved in them.

The enormous and unnatural vices, the domestic crimes of cruelty, adultery, and bloodshed, the political scheming and the subtle arts of vengeance, the ecclesiastical tyranny and craft, the cynical scepticism and lustre of luxurious godlessness, which made Italy in the midst of her refinement blaze like "a bright and ominous star" before the nations; these were the very elements in which the genius of Webster—salamander-like in flame—could live and flourish. Only the incidents of Italian history, or of French history in its Italianated epoch, were capable of supplying him with the proper type of plot. It was in Italy alone, or in an Italianated country, such as England for a brief space in the reign of the first Stuart threatened to become, that the well-nigh diabolical wickedness of his characters might have been realised. An audience familiar with Italian novels through Belleforest and Painter,



inflamed by the long struggle of the Reformation against the scarlet abominations of the Papal See, outraged in their moral sense by the political paradoxes of Machiavelli, horror-stricken at the still recent misdoings of Borgias and Medici and Farnesi, alarmed by that Italian policy which had conceived the massacre of S. Bartholemew in France, and infuriated by that ecclesiastical hypocrisy which triumphed in the same ; such an audience were at the right point of sympathy with a poet who undertook to lay the springs of Southern villany before them bare in a dramatic action. But, as the old proverb puts it, “Inglese Italianato è un diavolo incarnato.” “An Englishman assuming the Italian habit is a devil in the flesh.” The Italians were depraved, but spiritually feeble. The English playwright, when he brought them on the stage, arrayed with intellectual power and gleaming with the lurid splendour of a Northern fancy, made them tenfold darker and more terrible. To the subtlety and vices of the South he added the melancholy, meditation, and sinister insanity of his own climate. He deepened the complexion of crime and intensified lawlessness by robbing the Italian character of levity. Sin, in his conception of that character, was complicated with the sense of sin, as it never had been in a Florentine or a Neapolitan. He had not grasped the meaning of the Machiavellian conscience, in its cold serenity and disengagement from the dread of moral consequence. Not only are his villains stealthy, frigid, quick to evil, merciless, and void of honour ; but they brood upon their crimes and analyse their motives. In the midst of their audacity they are dogged by dread of coming retribution. At the crisis of their destiny they look back upon their better days with intellectual remorse. In the execution of their bloodiest schemes they groan beneath the chains of guilt they wear, and quake before the phantoms of their haunted brains. Thus passion and reflection, superstition and profanity, deliberate atrocity and fear of judgment, are united in the same

nature ; and to make the complex still more strange, the playwright has gifted these tremendous personalities with his own wild humour and imaginative irony. The result is almost monstrous, such an ideal of character as makes earth hell. And yet it is not without justification. To the Italian text has been added the Teutonic commentary, and both are fused by a dramatic genius into one living whole.

One of these men is Flamineo, the brother of Vittoria Corombona, upon whose part the action of the "White Devil" depends. He has been bred in arts and letters at the university of Padua ; but being poor and of luxurious appetites, he chooses the path of crime in courts for his advancement. A duke adopts him for his minion, and Flamineo acts the pander to this great man's lust. He contrives the death of his brother-in-law, suborns a doctor to poison the Duke's wife, and arranges secret meetings between his sister and the paramour who is to make her fortune and his own. His mother appears like a warning Até to prevent her daughter's crime. In his rage he cries :

What fury raised *thee* up ? Away, away !

And when she pleads the honour of their house he answers :

Shall I,  
Having a path so open and so free  
To my preferment, still retain your milk  
In my pale forehead ?

Later on, when it is necessary to remove another victim, he runs his own brother through the body and drives his mother to madness. Yet, in the midst of these crimes, we are unable to regard him as a simple cut-throat. His irony and reckless courting of damnation open-eyed to get his gust of life in this world, make him no common villain. He can be brave as well as fierce. When the Duke insults him he bandies taunt for taunt :

*Brach.* No, you pander?

*Flam.* What, me, my lord? Am I your dog?

*B.* A bloodhound: do you brave, do you stand me?

*F.* Stand you! let those that have diseases run;  
I need no plasters.

*B.* Would you be kicked?

*F.* Would you have your neck broke?

I tell you, duke, I am not in Russia;

My shins must be kept whole.

*B.* Do you know me?

*F.* Oh, my lord, methodically:

As in this world there are degrees of evils,

So in this world there are degrees of devils.

You're a great duke, I your poor secretary.

When the Duke dies and his prey escapes him, the rage of disappointment breaks into this fierce apostrophe:

I cannot conjure; but if prayers or oaths  
Will get the speech of him, though forty devils  
Wait on him in his livery of flames,  
I'll speak to him and shake him by the hand,  
Though I be blasted.

As crimes thicken round him, and he still despairs of the reward for which he sold himself, conscience awakes:

I have lived  
Riotously ill, like some that live in court,  
And sometimes when my face was full of smiles  
Have felt the maze of conscience in my breast.

The scholar's scepticism, which lies at the root of his perversity, finds utterance in this meditation upon death:

Whither shall I go now? O Lucian, thy ridiculous purgatory! to find Alexander the Great cobbling shoes, Pompey tagging points, and Julius Cæsar making hair-buttons!

Whether I resolve to fire, earth, water, air, or all the elements by scruples I know not, nor greatly care.

At the last moment he yet can say:

We cease to grieve, cease to be Fortune's slaves,  
Nay, cease to die, by dying.

And again, with the very yielding of his spirit :

My life was a black charnel.

It will be seen that in no sense does Flamineo resemble Iago. He is not a traitor working by craft and calculating ability to well-considered ends. He is the desperado frantically clutching at an uncertain and impossible satisfaction. Webster conceives him as a self-abandoned atheist, who, maddened by poverty and tainted by vicious living, takes a fury to his heart, and, because the goodness of the world has been for ever lost to him, recklessly seeks the bad.

Bosola, in the "Duchess of Malfi," is of the same stamp. He too has been a scholar. He is sent to the galleys "for a notorious murder," and on his release he enters the service of two brothers, the Duke of Calabria and the Cardinal of Aragon, who place him as their intelligencer at the court of their sister.

*Bos.* It seems you would create me  
One of your familiars.

*Ferd.* Familiar ! what's that ?

*Bos.* Why, a very quaint invisible devil in flesh,  
An intelligencer.

*Ferd.* Such a kind of thriving thing  
I would wish thee ; and ere long thou may'st arrive  
At a higher place by it.

Lured by hope of preferment, Bosola undertakes the office of spy, tormentor, and at last of executioner. For :

Discontent and want  
Is the best clay to mould a villain of.

But his true self, though subdued to be what he quaintly styles "the devil's quilted anvil," on which "all sins are fashioned and the blows never heard," continually rebels against this destiny. Compared with Flamineo, he is less unnaturally criminal. His melancholy is more fantastic, his despair more noble. Throughout the course of craft and cruelty on which



he is goaded by a relentless taskmaster, his nature, hardened as it is, revolts.

At the end, when Bosola presents the body of the murdered Duchess to her brother, Webster has wrought a scene of tragic savagery that surpasses almost any other that the English stage can show. The sight of his dead sister maddens Ferdinand, who, feeling the eclipse of reason gradually absorb his faculties, turns round with frenzied hatred on the accomplice of his fratricide. Bosola demands the price of guilt. Ferdinand spurns him with the concentrated eloquence of despair and the extravagance of approaching insanity. The murderer taunts his master coldly and laconically, like a man whose life is wrecked, who has waded through blood to his reward, and who at the last moment discovers the sacrifice of his conscience and masculine freedom to be fruitless. Remorse, frustrated hopes, and thirst for vengeance convert Bosola from this hour forward into an instrument of retribution. The Duke and his brother the Cardinal are both brought to bloody deaths by the hand which they had used to assassinate their sister.

It is fitting that something should be said about Webster's conception of the Italian despot. Brachiano and Ferdinand, the employers of Flamineo and Bosola, are tyrants such as Savonarola described, and as we read of in the chronicles of petty Southern cities. Nothing is suffered to stand between their lust and its accomplishment. They override the law by violence, or pervert its action to their own advantage :

The law to him  
Is like a foul black cobweb to a spider ;  
He makes it his dwelling and a prison  
To entangle those shall feed him.

They are eaten up with parasites, accomplices, and all the creatures of their crimes :

He and his brother are like plum-trees that grow crooked over standing pools ; they are rich and over-laden with fruit, but none but crows, pies, and caterpillars feed on them.

In their lives they are without a friend ; for society in guilt brings nought of comfort, and honours are but emptiness :

Glories, like glow-worms, afar off shine bright ;  
But looked to near, have neither heat nor light.

Their plots and counterplots drive repose far from them :

There's but three furies found in spacious hell ;  
But in a great man's breast three thousand dwell.

Fearful shapes afflict their fancy ; shadows of ancestral crime or ghosts of their own raising :

For these many years  
None of our family dies, but there is seen  
The shape of an old woman ; which is given  
By tradition to us to have been murdered  
By her nephews for her riches.

Apparitions haunt them :

How tedious is a guilty conscience !  
When I look into the fish-ponds in my garden,  
Methinks I see a thing armed with a rake  
That seems to strike at me.

Continually scheming against the objects of their avarice and hatred, preparing poisons or suborning bravoës, they know that these same arts will be employed against them. The wine-cup hides arsenic ; the head-piece is smeared with antimony ; there is a dagger behind every arras, and each shadow is a murderer's. When death comes, they meet it trembling. What irony Webster has condensed in Brachiano's outcry :

On pain of death, let no man name death to me ;  
It is a word infinitely horrible.

And how solemn are the following reflections on the death of princes :

O thou soft natural death, that art joint-twin  
To sweetest slumber ! no rough-bearded comet  
Stares on thy mild departure ; the dull owl  
Beats not against thy casement ; the hoarse wolf  
Scents not thy carrion : pity winds thy corse,  
Whilst horror waits on princes.

After their death, this is their epitaph :

These wretched eminent things  
Leave no more fame behind 'em than should one  
Fall in a frost and leave his print in snow.

Of Webster's despots, the finest in conception and the firmest in execution is Ferdinand of Aragon. Jealousy of his sister and avarice take possession of him and torment him like furies. The flash of repentance over her strangled body is also the first flash of insanity. He survives to present the spectacle of a crazed lunatic, and to be run through the body by his paid assassin. In the Cardinal of Aragon, Webster paints a profligate Churchman, no less voluptuous, blood-guilty, and the rest of it, than his brother the Duke of Calabria. It seems to have been the poet's purpose in each of his Italian tragedies to unmask Rome as the Papal city really was. In the lawless desperado, the intemperate tyrant, and the godless ecclesiastic, he portrayed the three curses from which Italian society was actually suffering.

It has been needful to dwell upon the gloomy and fantastic side of Webster's genius. But it must not be thought that he could touch no finer chord. Indeed, it might be said that in the domain of pathos he is even more powerful than in that of horror. His mastery in this region is displayed in the creation of that dignified and beautiful woman, the Duchess of Malfi, who, with nothing in her nature, had she but lived prosperously, to divide her from the sisterhood of gentle ladies,

walks, shrined in love and purity and conscious rectitude, amid the snares and pitfalls of her persecutors, to die at last the victim of a brother's fevered avarice and a desperado's egotistical ambition. The apparatus of infernal cruelty, the dead man's hand, the semblances of murdered sons and husband, the masque of madmen, the dirge and doleful emblems of the tomb with which she is environed in her prison by the torturers who seek to goad her into lunacy, are insufficient to disturb the tranquillity and tenderness of her nature. When the rope is being fastened to her throat, she does not spend her breath in recriminations, but turns to the waiting-woman and says :

Farewell, Cariola !

I pray thee look thou givest my little boy  
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl  
Say her prayers ere she sleep.

In the preceding scenes we have had enough, nay, overmuch, of madness, despair, and wrestling with doom. This is the calm that comes when death is present, when the tortured soul lays down its burden of the flesh with gladness. But Webster has not spared another touch of thrilling pathos. The death-struggle is over ; the fratricide has rushed away, a maddened man ; the murderer is gazing with remorse upon the beautiful dead body of his lady, wishing he had the world wherewith to buy her back to life again ; when suddenly she murmurs "Mercy !" Our interest, already overstrained, revives with momentary hope. But the guardians of the grave will not be exorcised ; and "Mercy !" is the last groan of the injured Duchess.

Webster showed great skill in his delineation of the Duchess. He had to paint a woman in a hazardous situation : a sovereign stooping in her widowhood to wed a servant ; a lady living with the mystery of this unequal marriage round her like a



veil. He dowered her with no salient qualities of intellect or heart or will; but he sustained our sympathy with her, and made us comprehend her. To the last she is a Duchess; and when she has divested state and bowed her head to enter the low gate of heaven—too low for coronets—her poet shows us, in the lines already quoted, that the woman still survives.

The same pathos surrounds the melancholy portrait of Isabella in "Vittoria Corombona." But Isabella, in that play, serves chiefly to enhance the tyranny of her triumphant rival. The main difficulty under which these scenes of rarest pathos would labour, were they brought upon the stage, is their simplicity in contrast with the ghastly and contorted horrors that envelope them. A dialogue abounding in the passages I have already quoted—a dialogue which bandies "O you screech-owl!" and "Thou foul black cloud!"—in which a sister's admonition to her brother to think twice of suicide assumes a form so weird as this:

I prithee, yet remember,  
Millions are now in graves, which at last day  
Like mandrakes shall rise shrieking,—

such a dialogue could not be rendered save by actors strung up to a pitch of almost frenzied tension. To do full justice to what in Webster's style would be spasmodic were it not so weighty, and at the same time to maintain the purity of outline and melodious rhythm of such characters as Isabella, demands no common histrionic power.

In attempting to define Webster's touch upon Italian tragic story, I have been led perforce to concentrate attention on what is painful and shocking to our sense of harmony in art. He was a vigorous and profoundly imaginative playwright. But his most enthusiastic admirers will hardly contend that good taste or moderation determined the movement of his genius. Nor, though his insight into the essential dreadfulness

of Italian tragedy was so deep, is it possible to maintain that his portraiture of Italian life was true to its more superficial aspects. What place would there be for a Correggio or a Raphael in such a world as Webster's? Yet we know that the art of Raphael and Correggio is in exact harmony with the Italian temperament of the same epoch which gave birth to Cesare Borgia and Bianca Capello. The comparatively slighter sketch of Iachimo in *Cymbeline* represents the Italian as he felt and lived, better than the laboured portrait of Flamineo. Webster's Italian tragedies are consequently true, not so much to the actual conditions of Italy, as to the moral impression made by those conditions on a Northern imagination.

## *A. VENETIAN MEDLEY.*

### I.—FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND FAMILIARITY.

It is easy to feel and to say something obvious about Venice. The influence of this sea-city is unique, immediate, and unmistakable. But to express the sober truth of those impressions which remain when the first astonishment of the Venetian revelation has subsided, when the spirit of the place has been harmonised through familiarity with our habitual mood, is difficult.

Venice inspires at first an almost Corybantic rapture. From our earliest visits, if these have been measured by days rather than weeks, we carry away with us the memory of sunsets emblazoned in gold and crimson upon cloud and water; of violet domes and bell-towers etched against the orange of a western sky; of moonlight silvering breeze-rippled breadths of liquid blue; of distant islands shimmering in sunlitten haze; of music and black gliding boats; of labyrinthine darkness made for mysteries of love and crime; of statue-fretted palace fronts; of brazen clangour and a moving crowd; of pictures by earth's proudest painters, cased in gold on walls of council chambers where Venice sat enthroned a queen, where nobles swept the floors with robes of Tyrian brocade. These reminiscences will be attended by an ever-present sense of loneliness and silence in the world around; the sadness of a limitless horizon, the solemnity of an unbroken arch of heaven, the calm and greyness of evening on the lagoons, the pathos of a marble city crumbling to its grave in mud and brine.

These first impressions of Venice are true. Indeed they are inevitable. They abide, and form a glowing background for all subsequent pictures, toned more austerely, and painted in more lasting hues of truth upon the brain. Those have never felt Venice at all who have not known this primal rapture, or who perhaps expected more of colour, more of melodrama, from a scene which nature and the art of man have made the richest in these qualities. Yet the mood engendered by this first experience is not destined to be permanent. It contains an element of unrest and unreality which vanishes upon familiarity. From the blare of that triumphal bourdon of brass instruments emerge the delicate voices of violin and clarinette. To the contrasted passions of our earliest love succeed a multitude of sweet and fanciful emotions. It is my present purpose to recapture some of the impressions made by Venice in more tranquil moods. Memory might be compared to a kaleidoscope. Far away from Venice I raise the wonder-working tube, allow the glittering fragments to settle as they please, and with words attempt to render something of the patterns I behold.

## II.—A LODGING IN SAN VIO.

I have escaped from the hotels with their bustle of tourists and crowded tables-d'hôte. My garden stretches down to the Grand Canal, closed at the end with a pavilion, where I lounge and smoke and watch the cornice of the Prefettura fretted with gold in sunset light. My sitting-room and bedroom face the southern sun. There is a canal below, crowded with gondolas, and across its bridge the good folk of San Vio come and go the whole day long—men in blue shirts with enormous hats, and jackets slung on their left shoulder; women in kerchiefs of orange and crimson. Barelegged boys sit upon the parapet, dangling their feet above the rising tide. A hawker passes, balancing a basket full of live and crawl-



ing crabs. Barges filled with Brenta water or Mirano wine take up their station at the neighbouring steps, and then ensues a mighty splashing and hurrying to and fro of men with tubs upon their heads. The brawny fellows in the wine-barge are red from brows to breast with drippings of the vat. And now there is a bustle in the quarter. A *barca* has arrived from S. Erasmo, the island of the market-gardens. It is piled with gourds and pumpkins, cabbages and tomatoes, pomegranates and pears—a pyramid of gold and green and scarlet. Brown men lift the fruit aloft, and women bending from the pathway bargain for it. A clatter of chaffering tongues, a ring of coppers, a Babel of hoarse sea-voices, proclaim the sharpness of the struggle. When the quarter has been served, the boat sheers off diminished in its burden. Boys and girls are left seasoning their polenta with a slice of *zucca*, while the mothers of a score of families go pattering up yonder courtyard with the material for their husbands' supper in their handkerchiefs. Across the canal, or more correctly the *Rio*, opens a wide grass-grown court. It is lined on the right hand by a row of poor dwellings, swarming with gondoliers' children. A garden wall runs along the other side, over which I can see pomegranate-trees in fruit and pergolas of vines. Far beyond are more low houses, and then the sky, swept with sea-breezes, and the masts of an ocean-going ship against the dome and turrets of Palladio's Redentore.

This is my home. By day it is as lively as a scene in *Masaniello*. By night, after nine o'clock, the whole stir of the quarter has subsided. Far away I hear the bell of some church tell the hours. But no noise disturbs my rest, unless perhaps a belated gondolier moors his boat beneath the window. My one maid, Catina, sings at her work the whole day through. My gondolier, Francesco, acts as valet. He wakes me in the morning, opens the shutters, brings sea-water for my bath, and takes his orders for the day. "Will it do for Chioggia, Fran-

cesco?" "Sissignore! The Signorino has set off in his *sandolo* already with Antonio. The Signora is to go with us in the gondola." "Then get three more men, Francesco, and see that all of them can sing."

### III.—TO CHIOGGIA WITH OAR AND SAIL.

The *sandolo* is a boat shaped like the gondola, but smaller and lighter, without benches, and without the high steel prow or *ferro* which distinguishes the gondola. The gunwale is only just raised above the water, over which the little craft skims with a rapid bounding motion, affording an agreeable variation from the stately swan-like movement of the gondola. In one of these boats—called by him the *Fisolo* or Seamew—my friend Eustace had started with Antonio, intending to row the whole way to Chioggia, or, if the breeze favoured, to hoist a sail and help himself along. After breakfast, when the crew for my gondola had been assembled, Francesco and I followed with the Signora. It was one of those perfect mornings which occur as a respite from broken weather, when the air is windless and the light falls soft through haze on the horizon. As we broke into the lagoon behind the Redentore, the islands in front of us, S. Spirito, Poveglia, Malamocco, seemed as though they were just lifted from the sea-line. The Euganeans, far away to westward, were bathed in mist, and almost blent with the blue sky. Our four rowers put their backs into their work; and soon we reached the port of Malamocco, where a breeze from the Adriatic caught us sideways for a while. This is the largest of the breaches in the Lidi, or raised sand-reefs, which protect Venice from the sea: it affords an entrance to vessels of draught like the steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental Company. We crossed the dancing wavelets of the port; but when we passed under the lee of Pelestrina, the breeze failed, and the lagoon was once again a

sheet of undulating glass. At S. Pietro on this island a halt was made to give the oarsmen wine, and here we saw the women at their cottage doorways making lace. The old lace industry of Venice has recently been revived. From Burano and Pelestrina cargoes of hand-made imitations of the ancient fabrics are sent at intervals to Jesurun's magazine at S. Marco. He is the chief *impresario* of the trade, employing hundreds of hands, and speculating for a handsome profit in the foreign market on the price he gives his workwomen.

Now we are well lost in the lagoons—Venice no longer visible behind; the Alps and Euganeans shrouded in a noon-day haze; the lowlands at the mouth of Brenta marked by clumps of trees ephemerally faint in silver silhouette against the filmy, shimmering horizon. Form and colour have disappeared in light-irradiated vapour of an opal hue. And yet instinctively we know that we are not at sea; the different quality of the water, the piles emerging here and there above the surface, the suggestion of coast-lines scarcely felt in this infinity of lustre, all remind us that our voyage is confined to the charmed limits of an inland lake. At length the jutting headland of Pelestrina was reached. We broke across the Porto di Chioggia, and saw Chioggia itself ahead—a huddled mass of houses low upon the water. One by one, as we rowed steadily, the fishing-boats passed by, emerging from their harbour for a twelve hours' cruise upon the open sea. In a long line they came, with variegated sails of orange, red, and saffron, curiously chequered at the corners, and cantled with devices in contrasted tints. A little land-breeze carried them forward. The lagoon reflected their deep colours till they reached the port. Then, slightly swerving eastward on their course, but still in single file, they took the sea and scattered, like beautiful bright-plumaged birds, who from a streamlet float into a lake, and find their way at large according as each wills.

The Signorino and Antonio, though want of wind obliged them to row the whole way from Venice, had reached Chioggia an hour before, and stood waiting to receive us on the quay. It is a quaint town this Chioggia, which has always lived a separate life from that of Venice. Language and race and customs have held the two populations apart from those distant years when Genoa and the Republic of S. Mark fought their duel to the death out in the Chioggian harbours, down to these days, when your Venetian gondolier will tell you that the Chioggoto loves his pipe more than his *donna* or his wife. The main canal is lined with substantial palaces, attesting to old wealth and comfort. But from Chioggia, even more than from Venice, the tide of modern luxury and traffic has retreated. The place is left to fishing folk and builders of the fishing craft, whose wharves still form the liveliest quarter. Wandering about its wide deserted courts and *calli*, we feel the spirit of the decadent Venetian nobility. Passages from Goldoni's and Casanova's Memoirs occur to our memory. It seems easy to realise what they wrote about the dishevelled gaiety and lawless license of Chioggia in the days of powder, sword-knot, and *soprani*. Baffo walks beside us in hypocritical composure of bag-wig and senatorial dignity, whispering unmentionable sonnets in his dialect of *Xe* and *Ga*. Somehow or another that last dotage of S. Mark's decrepitude is more recoverable by our fancy than the heroism of Pisani in the fourteenth century.

From his prison in blockaded Venice the great admiral was sent forth on a forlorn hope, and blocked victorious Doria here with boats on which the nobles of the Golden Book had spent their fortunes. Pietro Doria boasted that with his own hands he would bridle the bronze horses of S. Mark. But now he found himself between the navy of Carlo Zeno in the Adriatic and the flotilla led by Vittore Pisani across the lagoon. It was in vain that the Republic



of S. George strained every nerve to send him succour from the Ligurian sea ; in vain that the lords of Padua kept opening communications with him from the mainland. From the 1st of January 1380 till the 21st of June the Venetians pressed the blockade ever closer, grappling their foemen in a grip that if relaxed one moment would have hurled him at their throats. The long and breathless struggle ended in the capitulation at Chioggia of what remained of Doria's forty-eight galleys and fourteen thousand men.

These great deeds are far away and hazy. The brief sentences of mediæval annalists bring them less near to us than the *chroniques scandaleuses* of good-for-nothing scoundrels, whose vulgar adventures might be revived at the present hour with scarce a change of setting. Such is the force of *intimité* in literature. And yet Baffo and Casanova are as much of the past as Doria and Pisani. It is only perhaps that the survival of decadence in all we see around us, forms a fitting framework for our recollections of their vividly described corruption.

Not far from the landing-place a balustraded bridge of ample breadth and large bravura manner spans the main canal. Like everything at Chioggia, it is dirty and has fallen from its first estate. Yet neither time nor injury can obliterate style or wholly degrade marble. Hard by the bridge there are two rival inns. At one of these we ordered a sea-dinner—crabs, cuttlefishes, soles, and turbot—which we ate at a table in the open air. Nothing divided us from the street except a row of Japanese privet-bushes in hooped tubs. Our banquet soon assumed a somewhat unpleasant similitude to that of Dives ; for the Chioggoti, in all stages of decrepitude and squalor, crowded round to beg for scraps—indescribable old women, enveloped in their own petticoats thrown over their heads ; girls hooded with sombre black mantles ; old men wrinkled beyond recognition by their nearest relatives ; jabbering, half-naked boys ; slow, slouching fishermen with clay pipes in

their mouths and philosophical acceptance on their sober foreheads.

That afternoon the gondola and sandolo were lashed together side by side. Two sails were raised, and in this lazy fashion we stole homewards, faster or slower according as the breeze freshened or slackened, landing now and then on islands, sauntering along the sea-walls which bulwark Venice from the Adriatic, and singing—those at least of us who had the power to sing. Four of our Venetians had trained voices and memories of inexhaustible music. Over the level water, with the ripple plashing at our keel, their songs went abroad, and mingled with the failing day. The barcaroles and serenades peculiar to Venice were, of course, in harmony with the occasion. But some transcripts from classical operas were even more attractive, through the dignity with which these men invested them. By the peculiarity of their treatment the *recitativo* of the stage assumed a solemn movement, marked in rhythm, which removed it from the commonplace into antiquity, and made me understand how cultivated music may pass back by natural, unconscious transition into the realm of popular melody.

The sun sank, not splendidly, but quietly in banks of clouds above the Alps. Stars came out, uncertainly at first, and then in strength, reflected on the sea. The men of the Dogana watch-boat challenged us and let us pass. Madonna's lamp was twinkling from her shrine upon the harbour-pile. The city grew before us. Stealing into Venice in that calm—stealing silently and shadowlike, with scarce a ruffle of the water, the masses of the town emerging out of darkness into twilight, till San Giorgio's gun boomed with a flash athwart our stern, and the gas-lamps of the Piazzetta swam into sight; all this was like a long enchanted chapter of romance. And now the music of our men had sunk to one faint whistling from Eustace of tunes in harmony with whispers at the prow.

Then came the steps of the Palazzo Venier and the deep-scented darkness of the garden. As we passed through to supper, I plucked a spray of yellow *Banksia* rose, and put it in my button-hole. The dew was on its burnished leaves, and evening had drawn forth its perfume.

#### IV.—MORNING RAMBLES.

A story is told of Poussin, the French painter, that when he was asked why he would not stay in Venice, he replied, "If I stay here, I shall become a colourist!" A somewhat similar tale is reported of a fashionable English decorator. While on a visit to friends in Venice, he avoided every building which contains a Tintoretto, averring that the sight of Tintoretto's pictures would injure his carefully trained taste. It is probable that neither anecdote is strictly true. Yet there is a certain epigrammatic point in both; and I have often speculated whether even Venice could have so warped the genius of Poussin as to shed one ray of splendour on his canvases, or whether even Tintoretto could have so sublimed the prophet of Queen Anne as to make him add dramatic passion to a London drawing-room. Anyhow, it is exceedingly difficult to escape from colour in the air of Venice, or from Tintoretto in her buildings. Long, delightful mornings may be spent in the enjoyment of the one and the pursuit of the other by folk who have no classical or pseudo-mediæval theories to oppress them.

Tintoretto's house, though changed, can still be visited. It formed part of the *Fondamenta dei Mori*, so called from having been the quarter assigned to Moorish traders in Venice. A spirited carving of a turbaned Moor leading a camel charged with merchandise, remains above the water-line of a neighbouring building; and all about the crumbling walls sprout flowering weeds—samphire and snapdragon and the spiked campanula,

which shoots a spire of sea-blue stars from chinks of Istrian stone.

The house stands opposite the Church of Santa Maria dell' Orto, where Tintoretto was buried, and where four of his chief masterpieces are to be seen. This church, swept and garnished, is a triumph of modern Italian restoration. They have contrived to make it as commonplace as human ingenuity could manage. Yet no malice of ignorant industry can obscure the treasures it contains—the pictures of Cima, Gian Bellini, Palma, and the four Tintoretts, which form its crowning glory. Here the master may be studied in four of his chief moods : as the painter of tragic passion and movement, in the huge Last Judgment; as the painter of impossibilities, in the Vision of Moses upon Sinai ; as the painter of purity and tranquil pathos, in the Miracle of S. Agnes ; as the painter of Biblical history brought home to daily life, in the Presentation of the Virgin. Without leaving the Madonna dell' Orto, a student can explore his genius in all its depth and breadth ; comprehend the enthusiasm he excites in those who seek, as the essentials of art, imaginative boldness and sincerity ; understand what is meant by adversaries who maintain that, after all, Tintoretto was but an inspired Gustave Doré. Between that quiet canvas of the Presentation, so modest in its cool greys and subdued gold, and the tumult of flying, ruining, ascending figures in the Judgment, what an interval there is ! How strangely the white lamb-like maiden, kneeling beside her lamb in the picture of S. Agnes, contrasts with the dusky gorgeousness of the Hebrew women despoiling themselves of jewels for the golden calf ! Comparing these several manifestations of creative power, we feel ourselves in the grasp of a painter who was essentially a poet, one for whom his art was the medium for expressing before all things thought and passion. Each picture is executed in the manner suited to its tone of feeling, the key of its conception.



Elsewhere than in the *Madonna dell' Orto* there are more distinguished single examples of Tintoretto's realising faculty. The *Last Supper* in San Giorgio, for instance, and the *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the *Scuola di San Rocco* illustrate his unique power of presenting sacred history in a novel, romantic framework of familiar things. The commonplace circumstances of ordinary life have been employed to portray in the one case a lyric of mysterious splendour; in the other, an idyll of infinite sweetness. Divinity shines through the rafters of that upper chamber, where round a low large table the Apostles are assembled in a group translated from the social customs of the painter's days. Divinity is shed upon the straw-spread manger, where Christ lies sleeping in the loft, with shepherds crowding through the room beneath.

A studied contrast between the simplicity and repose of the central figure and the tumult of passions in the multitude around, may be observed in the *Miracle of S. Agnes*. It is this which gives dramatic vigour to the composition. But the same effect is carried to its highest fulfilment, with even a loftier beauty, in the episode of Christ before the judgment-seat of Pilate, at San Rocco. Of all Tintoretto's religious pictures, that is the most profoundly felt, the most majestic. No other artist succeeded as he has here succeeded in presenting to us God incarnate. For this Christ is not merely the just man, innocent, silent before his accusers. The stationary, white-draped figure, raised high above the agitated crowd, with tranquil forehead slightly bent, facing his perplexed and fussy judge, is more than man. We cannot say perhaps precisely why he is divine. But Tintoretto has made us feel that he is. In other words, his treatment of the high theme chosen by him has been adequate.

We must seek the *Scuola di San Rocco* for examples of Tintoretto's liveliest imagination. Without ceasing to be

Italian in his attention to harmony and grace, he far exceeded the masters of his nation in the power of suggesting what is weird, mysterious, upon the border-land of the grotesque. And of this quality there are three remarkable instances in the Scuola. No one but Tintoretto could have evoked the fiend in his Temptation of Christ. It is an indescribable hermaphroditic genius, the genius of carnal fascination, with outspread downy rose-plumed wings, and flaming bracelets on the full but sinewy arms, who kneels and lifts aloft great stones, smiling entreatingly to the sad, grey Christ seated beneath a rugged pent-house of the desert. No one again but Tintoretto could have dashed the hot lights of that fiery sunset in such quivering flakes upon the golden flesh of Eve, half-hidden among laurels, as she stretches forth the fruit of the Fall to shrinking Adam. No one but Tintoretto, till we come to Blake, could have imagined yonder Jonah, summoned by the beck of God from the whale's belly. The monstrous fish rolls over in the ocean, blowing portentous vapour from his trump-shaped nostril. The prophet's beard descends upon his naked breast in hoary ringlets to the girdle. He has forgotten the past peril of the deep, although the whale's jaws yawn around him. Between him and the outstretched finger of Jehovah calling him again to life, there runs a spark of unseen spiritual electricity.

To comprehend Tintoretto's touch upon the pastoral idyll we must turn our steps to San Giorgio again, and pace those meadows by the running river in company with his Manna-Gatherers. Or we may seek the Accademia, and notice how he here has varied the Temptation of Adam by Eve, choosing a less tragic motive of seduction than the one so powerfully rendered at San Rocco. Or in the Ducal Palace we may take our station, hour by hour, before the Marriage of Bacchus and Ariadne. It is well to leave the very highest achievements of art untouched by criticism, undescribed.

And in this picture we have the most perfect of all modern attempts to realise an antique myth—more perfect than Raphael's Galatea, or Titian's Meeting of Bacchus with Ariadne, or Botticelli's Birth of Venus from the Sea. It may suffice to marvel at the slight effect which melodies so powerful and so direct as these produce upon the ordinary public. Sitting, as is my wont, one Sunday morning, opposite the Bacchus, four Germans with a cicerone sauntered by. The subject was explained to them. They waited an appreciable space of time. Then the youngest opened his lips and spake: "Bacchus war der Wein-Gott." And they all moved heavily away. *Bos locutus est.* "Bacchus was the wine-god!" This, apparently, is what a picture tells to one man. To another it presents divine harmonies, perceptible indeed in nature, but here by the painter-poet for the first time brought together and cadenced in a work of art. For another it is perhaps the hieroglyph of pent-up passions and desired impossibilities. For yet another it may only mean the unapproachable inimitable triumph of consummate craft.

Tintoretto, to be rightly understood, must be sought all over Venice—in the church as well as the Scuola di San Rocco; in the Temptation of S. Anthony at S. Trovaso no less than in the Temptations of Eve and Christ; in the decorative pomp of the Sala del Senato, and in the Paradisal vision of the Sala del Gran Consiglio. Yet, after all, there is one of his most characteristic moods, to appreciate which fully we return to the Madonna dell' Orto. I have called him "the painter of impossibilities." At rare moments he rendered them possible by sheer imaginative force. If we wish to realise this phase of his creative power, and to measure our own subordination to his genius in its most hazardous enterprise, we must spend much time in the choir of this church. Lovers of art who mistrust this play of the audacious fancy—aiming at sublimity in supersensual regions, sometimes

attaining to it by stupendous effort or authentic revelation, not seldom sinking to the verge of bathos, and demanding the assistance of interpretative sympathy in the spectator—such men will not take the point of view required of them by Tintoretto in his boldest flights, in the Worship of the Golden Calf and in the Destruction of the World by Water. It is for them to ponder well the flying archangel with the scales of judgment in his hand, and the seraph-charioted Jehovah enveloping Moses upon Sinai in lightnings.

The gondola has had a long rest. Were Francesco but a little more impatient, he might be wondering what had become of the padrone. I bid him turn, and we are soon gliding into the Sacca della Misericordia. This is a protected float, where the wood which comes from Cadore and the hills of the Ampezzo is stored in spring. Yonder square white house, standing out to sea, fronting Murano and the Alps, they call the Casa degli Spiriti. No one cares to inhabit it; for here, in old days, it was the wont of the Venetians to lay their dead for a night's rest before their final journey to the graveyard of S. Michele. So many generations of dead folk had made that house their inn, that it is now no fitting home for living men. San Michele is the island close before Murano, where the Lombardi built one of their most romantically graceful churches of pale Istrian stone, and where the Campo Santo has for centuries received the dead into its oozy clay. The cemetery is at present undergoing restoration. Its state of squalor and abandonment to cynical disorder makes one feel how fitting for Italians would be the custom of cremation. An island in the lagoons devoted to funeral pyres is a solemn and ennobling conception. This graveyard, with its ruinous walls, its mangy riot of unwholesome weeds, its corpses festering in slime beneath neglected slabs in hollow chambers, and the mephitic wash of poisoned waters that surround it, inspires the horror of disgust.



The morning has not lost its freshness. Antelao and Tofana, guarding the vale above Cortina, show faint streaks of snow upon their amethyst. Little clouds hang in the still autumn sky. There are men dredging for shrimps and crabs through shoals uncovered by the ebb. Nothing can be lovelier, more resting to eyes tired with pictures than this tranquil, sunny expanse of the lagoon. As we round the point of the Bersaglio, new landscapes of island and Alp and low-lying mainland move into sight at every slow stroke of the oar. A luggage-train comes lumbering along the railway bridge, puffing white smoke into the placid blue. Then we strike down Cannaregio, and I muse upon processions of kings and generals and noble strangers, entering Venice by this water-path from Mestre, before the Austrians built their causeway for the trains. Some of the rare scraps of fresco upon house fronts, still to be seen in Venice, are left in Cannaregio. They are chiaroscuro allegories in a bold bravura manner of the sixteenth century. From these and from a few rosy fragments on the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, the Fabbriche Nuove, and precious fading figures in a certain courtyard near San Stefano, we form some notion how Venice looked when all her palaces were painted. Pictures by Gentile Bellini, Mansueti, and Carpaccio help the fancy in this work of restoration. And here and there, in back canals, we come across coloured sections of old buildings, capped by true Venetian chimneys, which for a moment seem to realise our dream.

A morning with Tintoretto might well be followed by a morning with Carpaccio or Bellini. But space is wanting in these pages. Nor would it suit the manner of this medley to hunt the Lombardi through palaces and churches, pointing out their singularities of violet and yellow panellings in marble, the dignity of their wide-opened arches, or the delicacy of their shallow chiselled traceries in cream-white Istrian stone. It is

enough to indicate the goal of many a pleasant pilgrimage : warrior angels of Vivarini and Basaiti hidden in a dark chapel of the Frari ; Fra Francesco's fantastic orchard of fruits and flowers in distant S. Francesco della Vigna ; the golden Gian Bellini in S. Zaccaria ; Palma's majestic S. Barbara in S. Maria Formosa ; San Giobbe's wealth of sculptured frieze and floral scroll ; the Ponte di Paradiso, with its Gothic arch ; the painted plates in the Museo Civico ; and palace after palace, loved for some quaint piece of tracery, some moulding full of mediæval symbolism, some fierce impossible Renaissance freak of fancy.

Rather than prolong this list, I will tell a story which drew me one day past the Public Gardens to the metropolitan Church of Venice, San Pietro di Castello. The novella is related by Bandello. It has, as will be noticed, points of similarity to that of "Romeo and Juliet."

#### V.—A VENETIAN NOVELLA.

At the time when Carpaccio and Gentile Bellini were painting those handsome youths in tight jackets, parti-coloured hose, and little round caps placed awry upon their shocks of well-combed hair, there lived in Venice two noblemen, Messer Pietro and Messer Paolo, whose palaces fronted each other on the Grand Canal. Messer Paolo was a widower, with one married daughter, and an only son of twenty years or thereabouts, named Gerardo. Messer Pietro's wife was still living ; and this couple had but one child, a daughter, called Elena, of exceeding beauty, aged fourteen. Gerardo, as is the wont of gallants, was paying his addresses to a certain lady ; and nearly every day he had to cross the Grand Canal in his gondola, and to pass beneath the house of Elena on his way to visit his Dulcinea ; for this lady lived some distance up a little canal on which the western side of Messer Pietro's palace looked.

Now it so happened that at the very time when the story opens, Messer Pietro's wife fell ill and died, and Elena was left alone at home with her father and her old nurse. Across the little canal of which I spoke there dwelt another nobleman, with four daughters, between the years of seventeen and twenty-one. Messer Pietro, desiring to provide amusement for poor little Elena, besought this gentleman that his daughters might come on feast-days to play with her. For you must know that, except on festivals of the Church, the custom of Venice required that gentlewomen should remain closely shut within the private apartments of their dwellings. His request was readily granted; and on the next feast-day the five girls began to play at ball together for forfeits in the great saloon, which opened with its row of Gothic arches and balustraded balcony upon the Grand Canal. The four sisters, meanwhile, had other thoughts than for the game. One or other of them, and sometimes three together, would let the ball drop, and run to the balcony to gaze upon their gallants, passing up and down in gondolas below; and then they would drop flowers or ribbands for tokens. Which negligence of theirs annoyed Elena much; for she thought only of the game. Wherefore she scolded them in childish wise, and one of them made answer, "Elena, if you only knew how pleasant it is to play as we are playing on this balcony, you would not care so much for ball and forfeits!"

On one of those feast-days the four sisters were prevented from keeping their little friend company. Elena, with nothing to do, and feeling melancholy, leaned upon the window-sill which overlooked the narrow canal. And it chanced that just then Gerardo, on his way to Dulcinea, went by; and Elena looked down at him, as she had seen those sisters look at passers-by. Gerardo caught her eye, and glances passed between them, and Gerardo's gondolier, bending from the poop, said to his master, "O master! methinks that gentle maiden

is better worth your wooing than Dulcinea." Gerardo pretended to pay no heed to these words; but after rowing a little way, he bade the man turn, and they went slowly back beneath the window. This time Elena, thinking to play the game which her four friends had played, took from her hair a clove carnation and let it fall close to Gerardo on the cushion of the gondola. He raised the flower and put it to his lips, acknowledging the courtesy with a grave bow. But the perfume of the clove and the beauty of Elena in that moment took possession of his heart together, and straightway he forgot Dulcinea.

As yet he knew not who Elena was. Nor is this wonderful; for the daughters of Venetian nobles were but rarely seen or spoken of. But the thought of her haunted him awake and sleeping; and every feast-day, when there was the chance of seeing her, he rowed his gondola beneath her windows. And there she appeared to him in company with her four friends; the five girls clustering together like sister roses beneath the pointed windows of the Gothic balcony. Elena, on her side, had no thought of love; for of love she had heard no one speak. But she took pleasure in the game those friends had taught her, of leaning from the balcony to watch Gerardo. He meanwhile grew love-sick and impatient, wondering how he might declare his passion. Until one day it happened that, walking through a lane or *calle* which skirted Messer Pietro's palace, he caught sight of Elena's nurse, who was knocking at the door, returning from some shopping she had made. This nurse had been his own nurse in childhood; therefore he remembered her, and cried aloud, "Nurse, Nurse!" But the old woman did not hear him, and passed into the house and shut the door behind her. Whereupon Gerardo, greatly moved, still called to her, and when he reached the door, began to knock upon it violently. And whether it was the agitation of finding himself at last so near the wish of his heart,



or whether the pains of waiting for his love had weakened him, I know not ; but, while he knocked, his senses left him, and he fell fainting in the doorway. Then the nurse recognised the youth to whom she had given suck, and brought him into the courtyard by the help of handmaidens, and Elena came down and gazed upon him. The house was now full of bustle, and Messer Pietro heard the noise, and seeing the son of his neighbour in so piteous a plight, he caused Gerardo to be laid upon a bed. But for all they could do with him, he recovered not from his swoon. And after a while force was that they should place him in a gondola and ferry him across to his father's house. The nurse went with him, and informed Messer Paolo of what had happened. Doctors were sent for, and the whole family gathered round Gerardo's bed. After a while he revived a little ; and thinking himself still upon the doorstep of Pietro's palace, called again, "Nurse, Nurse !" She was near at hand, and would have spoken to him. But while he summoned his senses to his aid, he became gradually aware of his own kinsfolk and dissembled the secret of his grief. They beholding him in better cheer, departed on their several ways, and the nurse still sat alone beside him. Then he explained to her what he had at heart, and how he was in love with a maiden whom he had seen on feast-days in the house of Messer Pietro. But still he knew not Elena's name ; and she, thinking it impossible that such a child had inspired this passion, began to marvel which of the four sisters it was Gerardo loved. Then they appointed the next Sunday, when all the five girls should be together, for Gerardo by some sign, as he passed beneath the window, to make known to the old nurse his lady.

Elena, meanwhile, who had watched Gerardo lying still and pale in swoon beneath her on the pavement of the palace, felt the stirring of a new unknown emotion in her soul. When Sunday came, she devised excuses for keeping her four friends away,

bethinking her that she might see him once again alone, and not betray the agitation which she dreaded. This ill suited the schemes of the nurse, who nevertheless was forced to be content. But after dinner, seeing how restless was the girl, and how she came and went, and ran a thousand times to the balcony, the nurse began to wonder whether Elena herself were not in love with some one. So she feigned to sleep, but placed herself within sight of the window. And soon Gerardo came by in his gondola; and Elena, who was prepared, threw to him her nosegay. The watchful nurse had risen, and peeping behind the girl's shoulder, saw at a glance how matters stood. Thereupon she began to scold her charge, and say, "Is this a fair and comely thing, to stand all day at balconies and throw flowers at passers-by? Woe to you if your father should come to know of this! He would make you wish yourself among the dead!" Elena, sore troubled at her nurse's rebuke, turned and threw her arms about her neck, and called her "Nanna!" as the wont is of Venetian children. Then she told the old woman how she had learned that game from the four sisters, and how she thought it was not different, but far more pleasant, than the game of forfeits; whereupon her nurse spoke gravely, explaining what love is, and how that love should lead to marriage, and bidding her search her own heart if haply she could choose Gerardo for her husband. There was no reason, as she knew, why Messer Paolo's son should not mate with Messer Pietro's daughter. But being a romantic creature, as many women are, she resolved to bring the match about in secret.

Elena took little time to reflect, but told her nurse that she was willing, if Gerardo willed it too, to have him for her husband. Then went the nurse and made the young man know how matters stood, and arranged with him a day, when Messer Pietro should be in the Council of the Pregadi, and the servants of the palace otherwise employed, for him to come

and meet his Elena. A glad man was Gerardo, nor did he wait to think how better it would be to ask the hand of Elena in marriage from her father. But when the day arrived, he sought the nurse, and she took him to a chamber in the palace, where there stood an image of the Blessed Virgin. Elena was there, pale and timid; and when the lovers clasped hands, neither found many words to say. But the nurse bade them take heart, and leading them before Our Lady, joined their hands, and made Gerardo place his ring on his bride's finger. After this fashion were Gerardo and Elena wedded. And for some while, by the assistance of the nurse, they dwelt together in much love and solace, meeting often as occasion offered.

Messer Paolo, who knew nothing of these things, took thought meanwhile for his son's career. It was the season when the Signiory of Venice sends a fleet of galleys to Beirut with merchandise; and the noblemen may bid for the hiring of a ship, and charge it with wares, and send whomsoever they list as factor in their interest. One of these galleys, then, Messer Paolo engaged, and told his son that he had appointed him to journey with it and increase their wealth. "On thy return, my son," he said, "we will bethink us of a wife for thee." Gerardo, when he heard these words, was sore troubled, and first he told his father roundly that he would not go, and flew off in the twilight to pour out his perplexities to Elena. But she, who was prudent and of gentle soul, besought him to obey his father in this thing, to the end, moreover, that, having done his will and increased his wealth, he might afterwards unfold the story of their secret marriage. To these good counsels, though loth, Gerardo consented. His father was overjoyed at his son's repentance. The galley was straightway laden with merchandise, and Gerardo set forth on his voyage.

The trip to Beirut and back lasted usually six months or at the most seven. Now when Gerardo had been some six

months away, Messer Pietro, noticing how fair his daughter was, and how she had grown into womanhood, looked about him for a husband for her. When he had found a youth suitable in birth and wealth and years, he called for Elena, and told her that the day had been appointed for her marriage. She, alas! knew not what to answer. She feared to tell her father that she was already married, for she knew not whether this would please Gerardo. For the same reason she dreaded to throw herself upon the kindness of Messer Paolo. Nor was her nurse of any help in counsel; for the old woman repented her of what she had done, and had good cause to believe that, even if the marriage with Gerardo were accepted by the two fathers, they would punish her for her own part in the affair. Therefore she bade Elena wait on fortune, and hinted to her that, if the worst came to the worst, no one need know she had been wedded with the ring to Gerardo. Such weddings, you must know, were binding; but till they had been blessed by the Church, they had not taken the force of a religious sacrament. And this is still the case in Italy among the common folk, who will say of a man, "*Si, è ammogliato; ma il matrimonio non è stato benedetto.*" "Yes, he has taken a wife, but the marriage has not yet been blessed."

So the days flew by in doubt and sore distress for Elena. Then on the night before her wedding, she felt that she could bear this life no longer. But having no poison, and being afraid to pierce her bosom with a knife, she lay down on her bed alone, and tried to die by holding in her breath. A mortal swoon came over her; her senses fled; the life in her remained suspended. And when her nurse came next morning to call her, she found poor Elena cold as a corpse. Messer Pietro and all the household rushed, at the nurse's cries, into the room, and they all saw Elena stretched dead upon her bed undressed. Physicians were called, who made theories to explain the cause of death. But all believed that



she was really dead, beyond all help of art or medicine. Nothing remained but to carry her to church for burial instead of marriage. Therefore, that very evening, a funeral procession was formed, which moved by torchlight up the Grand Canal, along the Riva, past the blank walls of the Arsenal, to the Campo before San Pietro in Castello. Elena lay beneath the black felze in one gondola, with a priest beside her praying, and other boats followed bearing mourners. Then they laid her in a marble chest outside the church, and all departed, still with torches burning, to their homes.

Now it so fell out that upon that very evening Gerardo's galley had returned from Syria, and was anchoring within the port of Lido, which looks across to the island of Castello. It was the gentle custom of Venice at that time that, when a ship arrived from sea, the friends of those on board at once came out to welcome them, and take and give the news. Therefore many noble youths and other citizens were on the deck of Gerardo's galley, making merry with him over the safe conduct of his voyage. Of one of these he asked, "Whose is yonder funeral procession returning from San Pietro?" The young man made answer, "Alas for poor Elena, Messer Pietro's daughter! She should have been married this day. But death took her, and to-night they buried her in the marble monument outside the church." A woeful man was Gerardo, hearing suddenly this news, and knowing what his dear wife must have suffered ere she died. Yet he restrained himself, daring not to disclose his anguish, and waited till his friends had left the galley. Then he called to him the captain of the oarsmen, who was his friend, and unfolded to him all the story of his love and sorrow, and said that he must go that night and see his wife once more, if even he should have to break her tomb. The captain tried to dissuade him, but in vain. Seeing him so obstinate, he resolved not to desert Gerardo. The two men took one of the galley's boats, and

rowed together toward San Pietro. It was past midnight when they reached the Campo and broke the marble sepulchre asunder. Pushing back its lid, Gerardo descended into the grave and abandoned himself upon the body of his Elena. One who had seen them at that moment could not well have said which of the two was dead and which was living—Elena or her husband. Meantime the captain of the oarsmen, fearing lest the watch (set by the Masters of the Night to keep the peace of Venice) might arrive, was calling on Gerardo to come back. Gerardo heeded him no whit. But at the last, compelled by his entreaties, and as it were astonished, he arose, bearing his wife's corpse in his arms, and carried her clasped against his bosom to the boat, and laid her therein, and sat down by her side and kissed her frequently, and suffered not his friend's remonstrances. Force was for the captain, having brought himself into this scrape, that he should now seek refuge by the nearest way from justice. Therefore he hove gently from the bank, and plied his oar, and brought the gondola apace into the open waters. Gerardo still clasped Elena, dying husband by dead wife. But the sea-breeze freshened towards daybreak; and the Captain, looking down upon that pair, and bringing to their faces the light of his boat's lantern, judged their case not desperate at all. On Elena's cheek there was a flush of life less deadly even than the pallor of Gerardo's forehead. Thereupon the good man called aloud, and Gerardo started from his grief; and both together they chafed the hands and feet of Elena; and, the sea-breeze aiding with its saltness, they awoke in her the spark of life.

Dimly burned the spark. But Gerardo, being aware of it, became a man again. Then, having taken counsel with the captain, both resolved to bear her to that brave man's mother's house. A bed was soon made ready, and food was brought; and after due time, she lifted up her face and knew Gerardo.

The peril of the grave was past, but thought had now to be taken for the future. Therefore Gerardo, leaving his wife to the captain's mother, rowed back to the galley and prepared to meet his father. With good store of merchandise and with great gains from his traffic, he arrived in that old palace on the Grand Canal. Then having opened to Messer Paolo the matters of his journey, and shown him how he had fared, and set before him tables of disbursements and receipts, he seized the moment of his father's gladness. "Father," he said, and as he spoke he knelt upon his knees, "Father, I bring you not good store of merchandise and bags of gold alone; I bring you also a wedded wife, whom I have saved this night from death." And when the old man's surprise was quieted, he told him the whole story. Now Messer Paolo, desiring no better than that his son should wed the heiress of his neighbour, and knowing well that Messer Pietro would make great joy receiving back his daughter from the grave, bade Gerardo in haste take rich apparel and clothe Elena therewith, and fetch her home. These things were swiftly done; and after evenfall Messer Pietro was bidden to grave business in his neighbour's palace. With heavy heart he came, from a house of mourning to a house of gladness. But there, at the banquet-table's head he saw his dead child Elena alive, and at her side a husband. And when the whole truth had been declared, he not only kissed and embraced the pair who knelt before him, but of his goodness forgave the nurse, who in her turn came trembling to his feet. Then fell there joy and bliss in overmeasure that night upon both palaces of the Canal Grande. And with the morrow the Church blessed the spousals which long since had been on both sides vowed and consummated.

## VI.—ON THE LAGOONS.

The mornings are spent in study, sometimes among pictures, sometimes in the Marcian Library, or again in those vast convent chambers of the Frari, where the archives of Venice load innumerable shelves. The afternoons invite us to a further flight upon the water. Both sandolo and gondola await our choice, and we may sail or row, according as the wind and inclination tempt us.

Yonder lies San Lazzaro, with the neat red buildings of the Armenian convent. The last oleander blossoms shine rosy pink above its walls against the pure blue sky as we glide into the little harbour. Boats piled with coal-black grapes block the landing-place, for the Padri are gathering their vintage from the Lido, and their presses run with new wine. Eustace and I have not come to revive memories of Byron—that curious patron saint of the Armenian colony—or to inspect the printing-press, which issues books of little value for our studies. It is enough to pace the terrace, and linger half an hour beneath the low broad arches of the alleys pleached with vines, through which the domes and towers of Venice rise more beautiful by distance.

Malamocco lies considerably farther, and needs a full hour of stout rowing to reach it. Alighting there, we cross the narrow strip of land, and find ourselves upon the huge sea-wall—block piled on block—of Istrian stone in tiers and ranks, with cunning breathing-places for the waves to wreak their fury on and foam their force away in fretful waste. The very existence of Venice may be said to depend sometimes on these *murazzi*, which were finished at an immense cost by the Republic in the days of its decadence. The enormous monoliths which compose them had to be brought across the Adriatic in sailing vessels. Of all the Lidi, that of Malamocco is the weakest; and here,



if anywhere, the sea might effect an entrance into the lagoon. Our gondoliers told us of some places where the *murazzi* were broken in a gale, or *scioccale*, not very long ago. Lying awake in Venice, when the wind blows hard, one hears the sea thundering upon its sandy barrier, and blesses God for the *murazzi*. On such a night it happened once to me to dream a dream of Venice overwhelmed by water. I saw the billows roll across the smooth lagoon like a gigantic Eager. The Ducal Palace crumbled, and San Marco's domes went down. The Campanile rocked and shivered like a reed. And all along the Grand Canal the palaces swayed helpless, tottering to their fall, while boats piled high with men and women strove to stem the tide, and save themselves from those impending ruins. It was a mad dream, born of the sea's roar and Tintoretto's painting. But this afternoon no such visions are suggested. The sea sleeps, and in the moist autumn air we break tall branches of the seeded yellowing samphire from hollows of the rocks, and bear them homeward in a wayward bouquet mixed with cobs of Indian-corn.

Fusina is another point for these excursions. It lies at the mouth of the Canal di Brenta, where the mainland ends in marsh and meadows, intersected by broad renes. In spring the ditches bloom with fleurs-de-lys; in autumn they take sober colouring from lilac daisies and the delicate sea-lavender. Scores of tiny plants are turning scarlet on the brown moist earth; and when the sun goes down behind the Euganean hills, his crimson canopy of cloud, reflected on these shallows, muddy shoals, and wilderness of matted weeds, converts the common earth into a fairyland of fabulous dyes. Purple, violet, and rose are spread around us. In front stretches the lagoon, tinted with a pale light from the east, and beyond this pallid mirror shines Venice—a long low broken line, touched with the softest roseate flush. Ere we reach the Giudecca on our homeward way, sunset has faded. The western skies have

clad themselves in green, barred with dark fire-rimmed clouds. The Euganean hills stand like stupendous pyramids, Egyptian, solemn, against a lemon space on the horizon. The far reaches of the lagoons, the Alps, and islands assume those tones of glowing lilac which are the supreme beauty of Venetian evening. Then, at last, we see the first lamps glitter on the Zattere. The quiet of the night has come.

Words cannot be formed to express the endless varieties of Venetian sunset. The most magnificent follow after wet stormy days, when the west breaks suddenly into a labyrinth of fire, when chasms of clear turquoise heavens emerge, and horns of flame are flashed to the zenith, and unexpected splendours scale the fretted clouds, step over step, stealing along the purple caverns till the whole dome throbs. Or, again, after a fair day, a change of weather approaches, and high, infinitely high, the skies are woven over with a web of half-transparent cirrus-clouds. These in the afterglow blush crimson, and through their rifts the depth of heaven is of a hard and gem-like blue, and all the water turns to rose beneath them. I remember one such evening on the way back from Torcello. We were well out at sea between Mazzorbo and Murano. The ruddy arches overhead were reflected without interruption in the waveless ruddy lake below. Our black boat was the only dark spot in this sphere of splendour. We seemed to hang suspended; and such as this, I fancied, must be the feeling of an insect caught in the heart of a fiery-petalled rose. Yet not these melodramatic sunsets alone are beautiful. Even more exquisite, perhaps, are the lagoons, painted in monochrome of greys, with just one touch of pink upon a western cloud, scattered in ripples here and there on the waves below, reminding us that day has passed and evening come. And beautiful again are the calm settings of fair weather, when sea and sky alike are cheerful, and the topmost blades of the lagoon grass, peeping from the

shallows, glance like emeralds upon the surface. There is no deep stirring of the spirit in a symphony of light and colour; but purity, peace, and freshness make their way into our hearts.

## VII.—AT THE LIDO.

Of all these afternoon excursions, that to the Lido is most frequent. It has two points for approach. The more distant is the little station of San Nicoletto, at the mouth of the Porto. With an ebb-tide, the water of the lagoon runs past the mulberry gardens of this hamlet like a river. There is here a grove of acacia-trees, shadowy and dreamy, above deep grass, which even an Italian summer does not wither. The Riva is fairly broad, forming a promenade, where one may conjure up the personages of a century ago. For San Nicoletto used to be a fashionable resort before the other points of Lido had been occupied by pleasure-seekers. An artist even now will select its old-world quiet, leafy shade, and prospect through the islands of Vignole and Sant' Erasmo to snow-touched peaks of Antelao and Tofana, rather than the glare and bustle and extended view of Venice which its rival Sant' Elisabetta offers.

But when we want a plunge into the Adriatic, or a stroll along smooth sands, or a breath of genuine sea-breeze, or a handful of horned poppies from the dunes, or a lazy half-hour's contemplation of a limitless horizon flecked with russet sails, then we seek Sant' Elisabetta. Our boat is left at the landing-place. We saunter across the island and back again. Antonio and Francesco wait and order wine, which we drink with them in the shade of the little *osteria's* wall.

A certain afternoon in May I well remember, for this visit to the Lido was marked by one of those apparitions which are as rare as they are welcome to the artist's soul. I have always

held that in our modern life the only real equivalent for the antique mythopoeic sense—that sense which enabled the Hellenic race to figure for themselves the powers of earth and air, streams and forests, and the presiding genii of places, under the forms of living human beings, is supplied by the appearance at some felicitous moment of a man or woman who impersonates for our imagination the essence of the beauty that environs us. It seems, at such a fortunate moment, as though we had been waiting for this revelation, although perchance the want of it had not been previously felt. Our sensations and perceptions test themselves at the touchstone of this living individuality. The keynote of the whole music dimly sounding in our ears is struck. A melody emerges, clear in form and excellent in rhythm. The landscapes we have painted on our brain, no longer lack their central figure. The life proper to the complex conditions we have studied is discovered, and every detail, judged by this standard of vitality, falls into its right relations.

I had been musing long that day and earnestly upon the mystery of the lagoons, their opaline transparencies of air and water, their fretful risings and sudden subsidence into calm, the treacherousness of their shoals, the sparkle and the splendour of their sunlight. I had asked myself how would a Greek sculptor have personified the elemental deity of these salt-water lakes, so different in quality from the *Ægean* or *Ionian* sea? What would he find distinctive of their spirit? The Tritons of these shallows must be of other form and lineage than the fierce-eyed youth who blows his conch upon the curled crest of a wave, crying aloud to his comrades, as he bears the nymph away to caverns where the billows plunge in tideless instability.

We had picked up shells and looked for sea-horses on the Adriatic shore. Then we returned to give our boatmen wine beneath the vine-clad *pergola*. Four other men were there,



drinking, and eating from a dish of fried fish set upon the coarse white linen cloth. Two of them soon rose and went away. Of the two who stayed, one was a large, middle-aged man; the other was still young. He was tall and sinewy, but slender, for these Venetians are rarely massive in their strength. Each limb is equally developed by the exercise of rowing upright, bending all the muscles to their stroke. Their bodies are elastically supple, with free sway from the hips and a mercurial poise upon the ankle. Stefano showed these qualities almost in exaggeration. The type in him was refined to its artistic perfection. Moreover, he was rarely in repose, but moved with a singular brusque grace. A black broad-brimmed hat was thrown back upon his matted *zazzera* of dark hair tipped with dusky brown. This shock of hair, cut in flakes, and falling wilfully, reminded me of the lagoon grass when it darkens in autumn upon uncovered shoals, and sunset gilds its sombre edges. Fiery grey eyes beneath it gazed intensely, with compulsive effluence of electricity. It was the wild glance of a Triton. Short blonde moustache, dazzling teeth, skin bronzed, but showing white and healthful through open front and sleeves of lilac shirt. The dashing sparkle of this animate splendour, who looked to me as though the sea-waves and the sun had made him in some hour of secret and unquiet rapture, was somehow emphasised by a curious dint dividing his square chin—a cleft that harmonised with smile on lip and steady flame in eyes. I hardly know what effect it would have upon a reader to compare eyes to opals. Yet Stefano's eyes, as they met mine, had the vitreous intensity of opals, as though the colour of Venetian waters were vitalised in them. This noticeable being had a rough, hoarse voice, which, to develop the parallel with a sea-god, might have screamed in storm or whispered raucous messages from crests of tossing billows.

I felt, as I looked, that here, for me at least, the mythopoeism

of the lagoons was humanised ; the spirit of the salt-water lakes had appeared to me ; the final touch of life emergent from nature had been given. I was satisfied ; for I had seen a poem.

Then we rose, and wandered through the Jews' cemetery. It is a quiet place, where the flat grave-stones, inscribed in Hebrew and Italian, lie deep in Lido sand, waved over with wild grass and poppies. I would fain believe that no neglect, but rather the fashion of this folk, had left the monuments of generations to be thus resumed by nature. Yet, knowing nothing of the history of this burial-ground, I dare not affirm so much. There is one outlying piece of the cemetery which seems to contradict my charitable interpretation. It is not far from San Nicoletto. No enclosure marks it from the unconsecrated dunes. Acacia-trees sprout amid the monuments, and break the tablets with their thorny shoots upthrusting from the soil. Where patriarchs and rabbis sleep for centuries, the fishers of the sea now wander, and defile these habitations of the dead :

Corruption most abhorred  
Mingling itself with their renowned ashes,

Some of the grave-stones have been used to fence the towing-path ; and one I saw, well carved with letters legible of Hebrew on fair Istrian marble, which roofed an open drain leading from the stable of a Christian dog.

#### VIII.—A VENETIAN RESTAURANT.

At the end of a long glorious day, unhappy is that mortal whom the Hermes of a cosmopolitan hotel, white-chokered and white-waistcoated, marshals to the Hades of the *table-a'hôte*. The world has often been compared to an inn ; but on my way down to this common meal I have, not unfre-

quently, felt fain to reverse the simile. From their separate stations, at the appointed hour, the guests like ghosts flit to a gloomy gas-lit chamber. They are of various speech and race, preoccupied with divers interests and cares. Necessity and the waiter drive them all to a sepulchral syssition, whereof the cook too frequently deserves that old Greek comic epithet—*ἄδου μάγειρος*—cook of the Inferno. And just as we are told that in Charon's boat we shall not be allowed to pick our society, so here we must accept what fellowship the fates provide. An English spinster retailing paradoxes culled to-day from Ruskin's handbooks; an American citizen describing his jaunt in a gondóla from the railway station; a German shop-keeper descanting in one breath on Baur's Bock and the beauties of the Marcusplatz; an intelligent æsthete bent on working into clearness his own views of Carpaccio's genius: all these in turn, or all together, must be suffered gladly through well-nigh two long hours. Uncomforted in soul we rise from the expensive banquet; and how often rise from it unfed!

Far other be the doom of my own friends—of pious bards and genial companions, lovers of natural and lovely things! Nor for these do I desire a seat at Florian's marble tables, or a perch in Quadri's window, though the former supply dainty food, and the latter command a bird's-eye view of the Piazza. Rather would I lead them to a certain humble tavern on the Zattere. It is a quaint, low-built, unpretending little place, near a bridge, with a garden hard by which sends a cataract of honeysuckles sunward over a too-jealous wall. In front lies a Mediterranean steamer, which all day long has been discharging cargo. Gazing westward up Giudecca, masts and funnels bar the sunset and the Paduan hills; and from a little front room of the *trattoria* the view is so marine that one keeps fancying oneself in some ship's cabin. Sea-captains sit and smoke beside their glass of grog in the pavilion and

the *caffè*. But we do not seek their company at dinner-time. Our way lies under yonder arch, and up the narrow alley into a paved court. Here are oleanders in pots, and plants of Japanese spindle-wood in tubs ; and from the walls beneath the window hang cages of all sorts of birds—a talking parrot, a whistling blackbird, goldfinches, canaries, linnets. Athos, the fat dog, who goes to market daily in a *barchetta* with his master, snuffs around. “Where are Porthos and Aramis, my friend?” Athos does not take the joke ; he only wags his stump of tail and pokes his nose into my hand. What a Tartufe’s nose it is ! Its bridge displays the full parade of leather-bound brass-nailed muzzle. But beneath, this muzzle is a patent sham. The frame does not even pretend to close on Athos’ jaw, and the wise dog wears it like a decoration. A little farther we meet that ancient grey cat, who has no discoverable name, but is famous for the sprightliness and grace with which she bears her eighteen years. Not far from the cat one is sure to find Carlo—the bird-like, bright-faced, close-cropped Venetian urchin, whose duty it is to trot backwards and forwards between the cellar and the dining-tables. At the end of the court we walk into the kitchen, where the black-capped little *padrone* and the gigantic white-capped *chef* are in close consultation. Here we have the privilege of inspecting the larder—fish of various sorts, meat, vegetables, several kinds of birds, pigeons, tordi, beccafichi, geese, wild ducks, chickens, woodcock, &c., according to the season. We select our dinner, and retire to eat it either in the court among the birds beneath the vines, or in the low dark room which occupies one side of it. Artists of many nationalities and divers ages frequent this house ; and the talk arising from the several little tables, turns upon points of interest and beauty in the life and landscape of Venice. There can be no difference of opinion about the excellence of the *cuisine*, or about the reasonable charges of this *trattoria*. A soup of lentils, fol-



lowed by boiled turbot or fried soles, beefsteak or mutton cutlets, tordi or beccafichi, with a salad, the whole enlivened with good red wine or Florio's Sicilian Marsala from the cask, costs about four francs. Gas is unknown in the establishment. There is no noise, no bustle, no brutality of waiters, no *ahurissement* of tourists. And when dinner is done, we can sit awhile over our cigarette and coffee, talking until the night invites us to a stroll along the Zattere or a *giro* in the gondola.

#### IX.—NIGHT IN VENICE.

Night in Venice! Night is nowhere else so wonderful, unless it be in winter among the high Alps. But the nights of Venice and the nights of the mountains are too different in kind to be compared.

There is the ever-recurring miracle of the full moon rising, before day is dead, behind San Giorgio, spreading a path of gold on the lagoon which black boats traverse with the glow-worm lamp upon their prow; ascending the cloudless sky and silvering the domes of the Salute; pouring vitreous sheen upon the red lights of the Piazzetta; flooding the Grand Canal, and lifting the Rialto higher in ethereal whiteness; piercing but penetrating not the murky labyrinth of *rio* linked with *rio*, through which we wind in light and shadow, to reach once more the level glories and the luminous expanse of heaven beyond the Misericordia.

This is the melodrama of Venetian moonlight; and if a single impression of the night has to be retained from one visit to Venice, those are fortunate who chance upon a full moon of fair weather. Yet I know not whether some quieter and soberer effects are not more thrilling. To-night, for example, the waning moon will rise late through veils of *sciocco*. Over the bridges of San Cristoforo and San Gregorio, through the deserted Calle di Mezzo, my friend and I walk in darkness,

pass the marble basements of the Salute, and push our way along its Riva to the point of the Dogana. We are out at sea alone, between the Canalozzo and the Giudecca. A moist wind ruffles the water and cools our forehead. It is so dark that we can only see San Giorgio by the light reflected on it from the Piazzetta. The same light climbs the Campanile of S. Mark, and shows the golden angel in a mystery of gloom. The only noise that reaches us is a confused hum from the Piazza. Sitting and musing there, the blackness of the water whispers in our ears a tale of death. And now we hear a splash of oars, and gliding through the darkness comes a single boat. One man leaps upon the landing-place without a word and disappears. There is another wrapped in a military cloak asleep. I see his face beneath me, pale and quiet. The *barcaruolo* turns the point in silence. From the darkness they came; into the darkness they have gone. It is only an ordinary incident of coastguard service. But the spirit of the night has made a poem of it.

Even tempestuous and rainy weather, though melancholy enough, is never sordid here. There is no noise from carriage traffic in Venice, and the sea-wind preserves the purity and transparency of the atmosphere. It had been raining all day, but at evening came a partial clearing. I went down to the Molo, where the large reach of the lagoon was all moon-silvered, and San Giorgio Maggiore dark against the blueish sky, and Santa Maria della Salute domed with moon-irradiated pearl, and the wet slabs of the Riva shimmering in moonlight, the whole misty sky, with its clouds and stellar spaces, drenched in moonlight, nothing but moonlight sensible except the tawny flare of gas-lamps and the orange lights of gondolas afloat upon the waters. On such a night the very spirit of Venice is abroad. We feel why she is called Bride of the Sea.

Take yet another night. There had been a representation of Verdi's "Forza del Destino" at the Teatro Malibran.

After midnight we walked homeward through the Merceria, crossed the Piazza, and dived into the narrow *calle* which leads to the *traghetto* of the Salute. It was a warm moist starless night, and there seemed no air to breathe in those narrow alleys. The gondolier was half asleep. Eustace called him as we jumped into his boat, and rang our *soldi* on the gunwale. Then he arose and turned the *ferro* round, and stood across towards the Salute. Silently, insensibly, from the oppression of confinement in the airless streets to the liberty and immensity of the water and the night we passed. It was but two minutes ere we touched the shore and said good-night, and went our way and left the ferryman. But in that brief passage he had opened our souls to everlasting things—the freshness, and the darkness, and the kindness of the brooding, all-enfolding night above the sea.

## THE GONDOLIER'S WEDDING.

THE night before the wedding we had a supper-party in my rooms. We were twelve in all. My friend Eustace brought his gondolier Antonio with fair-haired, dark-eyed wife, and little Attilio, their eldest child. My own gondolier, Francesco, came with his wife and two children. Then there was the handsome, languid Luigi, who, in his best clothes, or out of them, is fit for any drawing-room. Two gondoliers, in dark blue shirts, completed the list of guests, if we exclude the maid Catina, who came and went about the table, laughing and joining in the songs, and sitting down at intervals to take her share of wine. The big room looking across the garden to the Grand Canal had been prepared for supper; and the company were to be received in the smaller, which has a fine open space in front of it to southwards. But as the guests arrived, they seemed to find the kitchen and the cooking that was going on quite irresistible. Catina, it seems, had lost her head with so many cuttlefishes, *orai*, cakes, and fowls, and cutlets to reduce to order. There was, therefore, a great bustle below stairs; and I could hear plainly that all my guests were lending their making, or their marring, hands to the preparation of the supper. That the company should cook their own food on the way to the dining-room, seemed a quite novel arrangement, but one that promised well for their contentment with the banquet. Nobody could be dissatisfied with what was everybody's affair.

When seven o'clock struck, Eustace and I, who had been



entertaining the children in their mothers' absence, heard the sound of steps upon the stairs. The guests arrived, bringing their own *risotto* with them. Welcome was short, if hearty. We sat down in carefully appointed order, and fell into such conversation as the quarter of San Vio and our several interests supplied. From time to time one of the matrons left the table and descended to the kitchen, when a finishing stroke was needed for roast pullet or stewed veal. The excuses they made their host for supposed failure in the dishes, lent a certain grace and comic charm to the commonplace of festivity. The entertainment was theirs as much as mine; and they all seemed to enjoy what took the form by degrees of curiously complicated hospitality. I do not think a well-ordered supper at any *trattoria*, such as at first suggested itself to my imagination, would have given any of us an equal pleasure or an equal sense of freedom. The three children had become the guests of the whole party. Little Attilio, propped upon an air-cushion, which puzzled him exceedingly, ate through his supper and drank his wine with solid satisfaction, opening the large brown eyes beneath those tufts of clustering fair hair which promise much beauty for him in his manhood. Francesco's boy, who is older and begins to know the world, sat with a semi-suppressed grin upon his face, as though the humour of the situation was not wholly hidden from him. Little Teresa too was happy, except when her mother, a severe Pomona, with enormous earrings and splendid *fazzoletto* of crimson and orange dyes, pounced down upon her for some supposed infraction of good manners—*creanza*, as they vividly express it here. Only Luigi looked a trifle bored. But Luigi has been a soldier, and has now attained the supercilious superiority of young-manhood, which smokes its cigar of an evening in the piazza and knows the merits of the different cafés.

The great business of the evening began when the eating

was over, and the decanters filled with new wine of Mirano circulated freely. The four best singers of the party drew together; and the rest prepared themselves to make suggestions, hum tunes, and join with fitful effect in choruses. Antonio, who is a powerful young fellow, with bronzed cheeks and a perfect tempest of coal-black hair in flakes upon his forehead, has a most extraordinary soprano—sound as a bell, strong as a trumpet, well-trained, and true to the least shade in intonation. Piero, whose rugged Neptunian features, sea-wrinkled, tell of a rough water-life, boasts a bass of resonant, almost pathetic quality. Francesco has a *mezza voce*, which might, by a stretch of politeness, be called baritone. Piero's comrade, whose name concerns us not, has another of these nondescript voices. They sat together with their glasses and cigars before them, sketching part-songs in outline, striking the keynote—now higher and now lower—till they saw their subject well in view. Then they burst into full singing, Antonio leading with a metal note that thrilled one's ears, but still was musical. Complicated contrapuntal pieces, such as we should call madrigals, with ever-recurring refrains of "Venezia, gemma Triatica, sposa del mar," descending probably from ancient days, followed each other in quick succession. Barcaroles, serenades, love-songs, and invitations to the water were interwoven for relief. One of these romantic pieces had a beautiful burden, "Dormi, o bella, o fingi di dormir," of which the melody was fully worthy. But the most successful of all the tunes were two with a sad motive. The one repeated incessantly "Ohimé! mia madre morì;" the other was a girl's love lament: "Perchè tradirmi, perchè lasciarmi! prima d'amarmi non eri così!" Even the children joined in these; and Catina, who took the solo part in the second, was inspired to a great dramatic effort. All these were purely popular songs. The people of Venice, however, are passionate for operas. Therefore we had duets and solos from "Ernani," the "Ballo

in Maschera," and the "Forza del Destino," and one comic chorus from "Boccaccio," which seemed to make them wild with pleasure. To my mind, the best of these more formal pieces was a duet between Attila and Italia from some opera unknown to me, which Antonio and Piero performed with incomparable spirit. It was noticeable how, descending to the people, sung by them for love at sea, or on excursions to the villages round Mestre, these operatic reminiscences had lost something of their theatrical formality, and assumed instead the serious gravity, the quaint movement, and marked emphasis which belong to popular music in Northern and Central Italy. An antique character was communicated even to the recitative of Verdi by slight, almost indefinable, changes of rhythm and accent. There was no end to the singing. "Siamo appassionati per il canto," frequently repeated, was proved true by the profusion and variety of songs produced from inexhaustible memories, lightly tried over, brilliantly performed, rapidly succeeding each other. Nor were gestures wanting—lifted arms, hands stretched to hands, flashing eyes, hair tossed from the forehead—unconscious and appropriate action—which showed how the spirit of the music and words alike possessed the men. One by one the children fell asleep. Little Attilio and Teresa were tucked up beneath my Scotch shawl at two ends of a great sofa; and not even his father's clarion voice, in the character of Italia defying Attila to harm "le mie superbe città," could wake the little boy up. The night wore on. It was past one. Eustace and I had promised to be in the church of the Gesuati at six next morning. We, therefore, gave the guests a gentle hint, which they as gently took. With exquisite, because perfectly unaffected, breeding they sank for a few moments into common conversation, then wrapped the children up, and took their leave. It was an uncomfortable, warm, wet night of sullen *sciocco*.

The next day, which was Sunday, Francesco called me at

five. There was no visible sunrise that cheerless damp October morning. Grey dawn stole somehow imperceptibly between the veil of clouds and leaden waters, as my friend and I, well sheltered by our *felze*, passed into the Giudecca, and took our station before the church of the Gesuati. A few women from the neighbouring streets and courts crossed the bridges in draggled petticoats on their way to first mass. A few men, shouldering their jackets, lounged along the Zattere, opened the great green doors, and entered. Then suddenly Antonio cried out that the bridal party was on its way, not as we had expected, in boats, but on foot. We left our gondola, and fell into the ranks, after shaking hands with Francesco, who is the elder brother of the bride. There was nothing very noticeable in her appearance, except her large dark eyes. Otherwise both face and figure were of a common type; and her bridal dress of sprigged grey silk, large veil and orange blossoms, reduced her to the level of a *bourgeoise*. It was much the same with the bridegroom. His features, indeed, proved him a true Venetian gondolier; for the skin was strained over the cheekbones, and the muscles of the throat beneath the jaws stood out like cords, and the bright blue eyes were deep-set beneath a spare brown forehead. But he had provided a complete suit of black for the occasion, and wore a shirt of worked cambric, which disguised what is really splendid in the physique of these oarsmen, at once slender and sinewy. Both bride and bridegroom looked uncomfortable in their clothes. The light that fell upon them in the church was dull and leaden. The ceremony, which was very hurriedly performed by an unctuous priest, did not appear to impress either of them. Nobody in the bridal party, crowding together on both sides of the altar, looked as though the service was of the slightest interest and moment. Indeed, this was hardly to be wondered at; for the priest, so far as I could understand his gabble, took the larger portion for read,



after muttering the first words of the rubric. A little carved image of an acolyte—a weird boy who seemed to move by springs, whose hair had all the semblance of painted wood, and whose complexion was white and red like a clown's—did not make matters more intelligible by spasmodically clattering responses.

After the ceremony we heard mass and contributed to three distinct offertories. Considering how much account even two *soldi* are to these poor people, I was really angry when I heard the copper shower. Every member of the party had his or her pennies ready, and dropped them into the boxes. Whether it was the effect of the bad morning, or the ugliness of a very ill-designed *barocco* building, or the fault of the fat oily priest, I know not. But the *sposalizio* struck me as tame and cheerless, the mass as irreverent and vulgarly conducted. At the same time there is something too impressive in the mass for any perfunctory performance to divest its symbolism of sublimity. A Protestant Communion Service lends itself more easily to degradation by unworthiness in the minister.

We walked down the church in double file, led by the bride and bridegroom, who had knelt during the ceremony with the best man—*compare*, as he is called—at a narrow *prie-dieu* before the altar. The *compare* is a person of distinction at these weddings. He has to present the bride with a great pyramid of artificial flowers, which is placed before her at the marriage-feast, a packet of candles, and a box of bonbons. The comfits, when the box is opened, are found to include two magnificent sugar babies lying in their cradles. I was told that a *compare*, who does the thing handsomely, must be prepared to spend about a hundred francs upon these presents, in addition to the wine and cigars with which he treats his friends. On this occasion the women were agreed that he had done his duty well. He was a fat, wealthy little man, who lived by letting market-boats for hire on the Rialto.

From the church to the bride's house was a walk of some three minutes. On the way we were introduced to the father of the bride—a very magnificent personage, with points of strong resemblance to Vittorio Emmanuele. He wore an enormous broad-brimmed hat and emerald-green earrings, and looked considerably younger than his eldest son, Francesco. Throughout the *nozze* he took the lead in a grand imperious fashion of his own. Wherever he went, he seemed to fill the place, and was fully aware of his own importance. In Florence I think he would have got the nickname of *Tacchin*, or turkey-cock. Here at Venice the sons and daughters call their parent briefly *Vecchio*. I heard him so addressed with a certain amount of awe, expecting an explosion of bubbly-jock displeasure. But he took it, as though it was natural, without disturbance. The other *Vecchio*, father of the bridegroom, struck me as more sympathetic. He was a gentle old man, proud of his many prosperous, laborious sons. They, like the rest of the gentlemen, were gondoliers. Both the *Vecchi*, indeed, continue to ply their trade, day and night, at the *traghetto*.

*Traghetti* are stations for gondolas at different points of the canals. As their name implies, it is the first duty of the gondoliers upon them to ferry people across. This they do for the fixed fee of five centimes. The *traghetto* are in fact Venetian cab-stands. And, of course, like London cabs, the gondolas may be taken off them for trips. The municipality, however, makes it a condition, under penalty of fine to the *traghetto*, that each station should always be provided with two boats for the service of the ferry. When vacancies occur on the *traghetto*, a gondolier who owns or hires a boat makes application to the municipality, receives a number, and is inscribed as plying at a certain station. He has now entered a sort of guild, which is presided over by a *Capo-traghetto*, elected by the rest for the protection of their interests, the

settlement of disputes, and the management of their common funds. In the old acts of Venice this functionary is styled *Gastaldo di traghetto*. The members have to contribute something yearly to the guild. This payment varies upon different stations, according to the greater or less amount of the tax levied by the municipality on the *traghetto*. The highest subscription I have heard of is twenty-five francs; the lowest, seven. There is one *traghetto*, known by the name of Madonna del Giglio or Zobenigo, which possesses near its *pergola* of vines a nice old brown Venetian picture. Some stranger offered a considerable sum for this. But the guild refused to part with it.

As may be imagined, the *traghetti* vary greatly in the amount and quality of their custom. By far the best are those in the neighbourhood of the hotels upon the Grand Canal. At any one of these a gondolier during the season is sure of picking up some foreigner or other who will pay him handsomely for comparatively light service. A *traghetto* on the Giudecca, on the contrary, depends upon Venetian traffic. The work is more monotonous, and the pay is reduced to its tariffed minimum. So far as I can gather, an industrious gondolier, with a good boat, belonging to a good *traghetto*, may make as much as ten or fifteen francs in a single day. But this cannot be relied on. They therefore prefer a fixed appointment with a private family, for which they receive by tariff five francs a day, or by arrangement for long periods perhaps four francs a day, with certain perquisites and small advantages. It is great luck to get such an engagement for the winter. The heaviest anxieties which beset a gondolier are then disposed of. Having entered private service, they are not allowed to ply their trade on the *traghetto*, except by stipulation with their masters. Then they may take their place one night out of every six in the rank and file. The gondoliers have two proverbs, which show how desirable it is,

while taking a fixed engagement, to keep their hold on the *traghetto*. One is to this effect: *il traghetto è un buon padrone*. The other satirises the meanness of the poverty-stricken Venetian nobility: *pompa di servitù, misera insegna*. When they combine the *traghetto* with private service, the municipality insists on their retaining the number painted on their gondola; and against this their employers frequently object. It is, therefore, a great point for a gondolier to make such an arrangement with his master as will leave him free to show his number. The reason for this regulation is obvious. Gondoliers are known more by their numbers and their *traghetti* than their names. They tell me that though there are upwards of a thousand registered in Venice, each man of the trade knows the whole confraternity by face and number. Taking all things into consideration, I think four francs a day the whole year round are very good earnings for a gondolier. On this he will marry and rear a family, and put a little money by. A young unmarried man, working at two and a half or three francs a day, is proportionately well-to-do. If he is economical, he ought upon these wages to save enough in two or three years to buy himself a gondola. A boy from fifteen to nineteen is called a *mezz' uomo*, and gets about one franc a day. A new gondola with all its fittings is worth about a thousand francs. It does not last in good condition more than six or seven years. At the end of that time the hull will fetch eighty francs. A new hull can be had for three hundred francs. The old fittings—brass sea-horses or *cavalli*, steel prow or *ferro*, covered cabin or *felze*, cushions and leather-covered back-board or *stramazetto*, may be transferred to it. When a man wants to start a gondola, he will begin by buying one already half past service—a *gondola da traghetto* or *di mezza età*. This should cost him something over two hundred francs. Little by little, he accumulates the needful fittings; and when his first purchase is worn out, he hopes to



set up with a well-appointed equipage. He thus gradually works his way from the rough trade which involves hard work and poor earnings to that more profitable industry which cannot be carried on without a smart boat. The gondola is a source of continual expense for repairs. Its oars have to be replaced. It has to be washed with sponges, blacked, and varnished. Its bottom needs frequent cleaning. Weeds adhere to it in the warm brackish water, growing rapidly through the summer months, and demanding to be scrubbed off once in every four weeks. The gondolier has no place where he can do this for himself. He therefore takes his boat to a wharf, or *squero*, as the place is called. At these *squeri* gondolas are built as well as cleaned. The fee for a thorough setting to rights of the boat is five francs. It must be done upon a fine day. Thus in addition to the cost, the owner loses a good day's work.

These details will serve to give some notion of the sort of people with whom Eustace and I spent our day. The bride's house is in an excellent position on an open canal leading from the Canalozzo to the Giudecca. She had arrived before us, and received her friends in the middle of the room. Each of us in turn kissed her cheek and murmured our congratulations. We found the large living-room of the house arranged with chairs all round the walls, and the company were marshalled in some order of precedence, my friend and I taking place near the bride. On either hand airy bedrooms opened out, and two large doors, wide open, gave a view from where we sat of a good-sized kitchen. This arrangement of the house was not only comfortable, but pretty; for the bright copper pans and pipkins ranged on shelves along the kitchen walls had a very cheerful effect. The walls were whitewashed, but literally covered with all sorts of pictures. A great plaster cast from some antique, an Atys, Adonis, or Paris, looked down from a bracket placed between the windows. There

was enough furniture, solid and well kept, in all the rooms. Among the pictures were full-length portraits in oils of two celebrated gondoliers—one in antique costume, the other painted a few years since. The original of the latter soon came and stood before it. He had won regatta prizes ; and the flags of four discordant colours were painted round him by the artist, who had evidently cared more to commemorate the triumphs of his sitter and to strike a likeness than to secure the tone of his own picture. This champion turned out a fine fellow—Corradini—with one of the brightest little gondoliers of thirteen for his son.

After the company were seated, lemonade and cakes were handed round amid a hubbub of chattering women. Then followed cups of black coffee and more cakes. Then a glass of Cyprus and more cakes. Then a glass of curaçoa and more cakes. Finally, a glass of noyau and still more cakes. It was only a little after seven in the morning. Yet politeness compelled us to consume these delicacies. I tried to shirk my duty ; but this discretion was taken by my hosts for well-bred modesty ; and instead of being let off, I had the richest piece of pastry and the largest maccaroon available pressed so kindly on me, that, had they been poisoned, I would not have refused to eat them. The conversation grew more and more animated, the women gathering together in their dresses of bright blue and scarlet, the men lighting cigars and puffing out a few quiet words. It struck me as a drawback that these picturesque people had put on Sunday-clothes to look as much like shopkeepers as possible. But they did not all of them succeed. Two handsome women, who handed the cups round—one a brunette, the other a blonde—wore skirts of brilliant blue, with a sort of white jacket, and white kerchief folded heavily about their shoulders. The brunette had a great string of coral, the blonde of amber, round her throat. Gold earrings and the long gold chains Venetian women wear, of all

patterns and degrees of value, abounded. Nobody appeared without them ; but I could not see any of an antique make. The men seemed to be contented with rings—huge, heavy rings of solid gold, worked with a rough flower pattern. One young fellow had three upon his fingers. This circumstance led me to speculate whether a certain portion at least of this display of jewellery around me had not been borrowed for the occasion.

Eustace and I were treated quite like friends. They called us *I Signori*. But this was only, I think, because our English names are quite unmanageable. The women fluttered about us and kept asking whether we really liked it all? whether we should come to the *pranzo*? whether it was true we danced? It seemed to give them unaffected pleasure to be kind to us ; and when we rose to go away, the whole company crowded round, shaking hands and saying : “ *Si diventerà bene stasera !* ” Nobody resented our presence ; what was better, no one put himself out for us. “ *Vogliono veder il nostro costume,* ” I heard one woman say.

We got home soon after eight, and, as our ancestors would have said, settled our stomachs with a dish of tea. It makes me shudder now to think of the mixed liquids and miscellaneous cakes we had consumed at that unwonted hour.

At half-past three, Eustace and I again prepared ourselves for action. His gondola was in attendance, covered with the *felze*, to take us to the house of the *sposa*. We found the canal crowded with poor people of the quarter—men, women, and children lining the walls along its side, and clustering like bees upon the bridges. The water itself was almost choked with gondolas. Evidently the folk of San Vio thought our wedding procession would be a most exciting pageant. We entered the house, and were again greeted by the bride and bridegroom, who consigned each of us to the control of a fair tyrant. This

is the most fitting way of describing our introduction to our partners of the evening ; for we were no sooner presented, than the ladies swooped upon us like their prey, placing their shawls upon our left arms, while they seized and clung to what was left available of us for locomotion. There was considerable giggling and tittering throughout the company when Signora Fenzo, the young and comely wife of a gondolier, thus took possession of Eustace, and Signora dell' Acqua, the widow of another gondolier, appropriated me. The affair had been arranged beforehand, and their friends had probably chaffed them with the difficulty of managing two mad Englishmen. However, they proved equal to the occasion, and the difficulties were entirely on our side. Signora Fenzo was a handsome brunette, quiet in her manners, who meant business. I envied Eustace his subjection to such a reasonable being. Signora dell' Acqua, though a widow, was by no means disconsolate ; and I soon perceived that it would require all the address and diplomacy I possessed, to make anything out of her society. She laughed incessantly ; darted in the most diverse directions, dragging me along with her ; exhibited me in triumph to her cronies ; made eyes at me over a fan ; repeated my clumsiest remarks, as though they gave her indescribable amusement ; and all the while jabbered Venetian at express rate, without the slightest regard for my incapacity to follow her vagaries. The *Vecchio* marshalled us in order. First went the *sposa* and *comare* with the mothers of bride and bridegroom. Then followed the *sposo* and the bridesmaid. After them I was made to lead my fair tormentor. As we descended the staircase there arose a hubbub of excitement from the crowd on the canals. The gondolas moved turbidly upon the face of the waters. The bridegroom kept muttering to himself, "How we shall be criticised ! They will tell each other who was decently dressed, and who stepped awkwardly into the boats, and what the price of my boots was !" Such



exclamations, murmured at intervals, and followed by chest-drawn sighs, expressed a deep preoccupation. With regard to his boots, he need have had no anxiety. They were of the shiniest patent leather, much too tight, and without a speck of dust upon them. But his nervousness infected me with a cruel dread. All those eyes were going to watch how we comported ourselves in jumping from the landing-steps into the boat! If this operation, upon a ceremonious occasion, has terrors even for a gondolier, how formidable it ought to be to me! And here is the Signora dell' Acqua's white cachemire shawl dangling on one arm, and the Signora herself languishingly clinging to the other; and the gondolas are fretting in a fury of excitement, like corks, upon the churned green water! The moment was terrible. The *sposa* and her three companions had been safely stowed away beneath their *felze*. The *sposo* had successfully handed the bridesmaid into the second gondola. I had to perform the same office for my partner. Off she went, like a bird, from the bank. I seized a happy moment, followed, bowed, and found myself to my contentment gracefully ensconced in a corner opposite the widow. Seven more gondolas were packed. The procession moved. We glided down the little channel, broke away into the Grand Canal, crossed it, and dived into a labyrinth from which we finally emerged before our destination, the Trattoria di San Gallo. The perils of the landing were soon over; and, with the rest of the guests, my mercurial companion and I slowly ascended a long flight of stairs leading to a vast upper chamber. Here we were to dine.

It had been the gallery of some palazzo in old days, was above one hundred feet in length, fairly broad, with a roof of wooden rafters and large windows opening on a courtyard garden. I could see the tops of three cypress-trees cutting the grey sky upon a level with us. A long table occupied the centre of this room. It had been laid for upwards of forty

persons, and we filled it. There was plenty of light from great glass lustres blazing with gas. When the ladies had arranged their dresses, and the gentlemen had exchanged a few polite remarks, we all sat down to dinner—I next my inexorable widow, Eustace beside his calm and comely partner. The first impression was one of disappointment. It looked so like a public dinner of middle-class people. There was no local character in costume or customs. Men and women sat politely bored, expectant, trifling with their napkins, yawning, muttering nothings about the weather or their neighbours. The frozen commonplaceness of the scene was made for me still more oppressive by Signora dell' Acqua. She was evidently satirical, and could not be happy unless continually laughing at or with somebody. "What a stick the woman will think me!" I kept saying to myself. "How shall I ever invent jokes in this strange land? I cannot even flirt with her in Venetian! And here I have condemned myself—and her too, poor thing—to sit through at least three hours of mortal dulness!" Yet the widow was by no means unattractive. Dressed in black, she had contrived by an artful arrangement of lace and jewellery to give an air of lightness to her costume. She had a pretty little pale face, a *minois chiffonné*, with slightly turned-up nose, large laughing brown eyes, a dazzling set of teeth, and a tempestuously frizzled mop of powdered hair. When I managed to get a side-look at her quietly, without being giggled at or driven half mad by unintelligible incitements to a jocularity I could not feel, it struck me that, if we once found a common term of communication we should become good friends. But for the moment that *modus vivendi* seemed unattainable. She had not recovered from the first excitement of her capture of me. She was still showing me off and trying to stir me up. The arrival of the soup gave me a momentary relief; and soon the serious business of the afternoon began. I may add that before

dinner was over, the Signora dell' Acqua and I were fast friends. I had discovered the way of making jokes, and she had become intelligible. I found her a very nice, though flighty, little woman; and I believe she thought me gifted with the faculty of uttering eccentric epigrams in a grotesque tongue. Some of my remarks were flung about the table, and had the same success as uncouth Lombard carvings have with connoisseurs in *naïvetés* of art. By that time we had come to be *compare* and *comare* to each other—the sequel of some clumsy piece of jocularity.

It was a heavy entertainment, copious in quantity, excellent in quality, plainly but well cooked. I remarked there was no fish. The widow replied that everybody present ate fish to satiety at home. They did not join a marriage feast at the San Gallo, and pay their nine francs, for that! It should be observed that each guest paid for his own entertainment. This appears to be the custom. Therefore attendance is complimentary, and the married couple are not at ruinous charges for the banquet. A curious feature in the whole proceeding had its origin in this custom. I noticed that before each cover lay an empty plate, and that my partner began with the first course to heap upon it what she had not eaten. She also took large helpings, and kept advising me to do the same. I said: "No; I only take what I want to eat; if I fill that plate in front of me as you are doing, it will be great waste." This remark elicited shrieks of laughter from all who heard it; and when the hubbub had subsided, I perceived an apparently official personage bearing down upon Eustace, who was in the same perplexity. It was then circumstantially explained to us that the empty plates were put there in order that we might lay aside what we could not conveniently eat, and take it home with us. At the end of the dinner the widow (whom I must now call my *comare*) had accumulated two whole chickens half a turkey, and a large assortment of mixed eatables. I,

performed my duty and won her regard by placing delicacies at her disposition.

Crudely stated, this proceeding moves disgust. But that is only because one has not thought the matter out. In the performance there was nothing coarse or nasty. These good folk had made a contract at so much a head—so many fowls, so many pounds of beef, &c., to be supplied ; and what they had fairly bought, they clearly had a right to. No one, so far as I could notice, tried to take more than his proper share ; except, indeed, Eustace and myself. In our first eagerness to conform to custom, we both overshot the mark, and grabbed at disproportionate helpings. The waiters politely observed that we were taking what was meant for two ; and as the courses followed in interminable sequence, we soon acquired the tact of what was due to us.

Meanwhile the room grew warm. The gentlemen threw off their coats—a pleasant liberty of which I availed myself, and was immediately more at ease. The ladies divested themselves of their shoes (strange to relate !) and sat in comfort with their stockinged feet upon the *scagliola* pavement. I observed that some cavaliers by special permission were allowed to remove their partners' slippers. This was not my lucky fate. My *comare* had not advanced to that point of intimacy. Healths began to be drunk. The conversation took a lively turn ; and women went fluttering round the table, visiting their friends, to sip out of their glass, and ask each other how they were getting on. It was not long before the stiff veneer of *bourgeoisie* which bored me had worn off. The people emerged in their true selves : natural, gentle, sparkling with enjoyment, playful. Playful is, I think, the best word to describe them. They played with infinite grace and innocence, like kittens, from the old men of sixty to the little boys of thirteen. Very little wine was drunk. Each guest had a litre placed before him. Many did not finish theirs ; and for very few was it



replenished. When at last the dessert arrived, and the bride's comfits had been handed round, they began to sing. It was very pretty to see a party of three or four friends gathering round some popular beauty, and paying her compliments in verse—they grouped behind her chair, she sitting back in it and laughing up to them, and joining in the chorus. The words, "*Brunetta mia simpatica, ti amo sempre più,*" sung after this fashion to Eustace's handsome partner, who puffed delicate whiffs from a Russian cigarette, and smiled her thanks, had a peculiar appropriateness. All the ladies, it may be observed in passing, had by this time lit their cigarettes. The men were smoking Toscani, Sellas, or Cavours, and the little boys were dancing round the table breathing smoke from their pert nostrils.

The dinner, in fact, was over. Other relatives of the guests arrived, and then we saw how some of the reserved dishes were to be bestowed. A side-table was spread at the end of the gallery, and these late-comers were regaled with plenty by their friends. Meanwhile, the big table at which we had dined was taken to pieces and removed. The *scagliola* floor was swept by the waiters. Musicians came streaming in and took their places. The ladies resumed their shoes. Every one prepared to dance.

My friend and I were now at liberty to chat with the men. He knew some of them by sight, and claimed acquaintance with others. There was plenty of talk about different boats, gondolas, and sandoles and topos, remarks upon the past season, and inquiries as to chances of engagements in the future. One young fellow told us how he had been drawn for the army, and should be obliged to give up his trade just when he had begun to make it answer. He had got a new gondola, and this would have to be hung up during the years of his service. The warehousing of a boat in these circumstances costs nearly one hundred francs a year, which is a

serious tax upon the pockets of a private in the line. Many questions were put in turn to us, but all of the same tenor. "Had we really enjoyed the *pranzo*? Now, really, were we amusing ourselves? And did we think the custom of the wedding *un bel costume*?" We could give an unequivocally hearty response to all these interrogations. The men seemed pleased. Their interest in our enjoyment was unaffected. It is noticeable how often the word *divertimento* is heard upon the lips of the Italians. They have a notion that it is the function in life of the *Signori* to amuse themselves.

The ball opened, and now we were much besought by the ladies. I had to deny myself with a whole series of comical excuses. Eustace performed his duty after a stiff English fashion—once with his pretty partner of the *pranzo*, and once again with a fat gondolier. The band played waltzes and polkas, chiefly upon patriotic airs—the Marcia Reale, Garibaldi's Hymn, &c. Men danced with men, women with women, little boys and girls together. The gallery whirled with a laughing crowd. There was plenty of excitement and enjoyment—not an unseemly or extravagant word or gesture. My *comare* careered about with a light mænadic impetuosity, which made me regret my inability to accept her pressing invitations. She pursued me into every corner of the room, but when at last I dropped excuses and told her that my real reason for not dancing was that it would hurt my health, she waived her claims at once with an *Ah, poverino!*

Some time after midnight we felt that we had had enough of *divertimento*. Francesco helped us to slip out unobserved. With many silent good wishes we left the innocent, playful people who had been so kind to us. The stars were shining from a watery sky as we passed into the piazza beneath the Campanile and the pinnacles of S. Mark. The Riva was almost empty, and the little waves fretted the boats moored to the piazzetta, as a warm moist breeze went fluttering by.

We smoked a last cigar, crossed our *traghetto*, and were soon sound asleep at the end of a long, pleasant day. The ball, we heard next morning, finished about four.

Since that evening I have had plenty of opportunities for seeing my friends the gondoliers, both in their own homes and in my apartment. Several have entertained me at their mid-day meal of fried fish and amber-coloured polenta. These repasts were always cooked with scrupulous cleanliness, and served upon a table covered with coarse linen. The polenta is turned out upon a wooden platter, and cut with a string called *lassa*. You take a large slice of it on the palm of the left hand, and break it with the fingers of the right. Wholesome red wine of the Paduan district and good white bread were never wanting. The rooms in which we met to eat looked out on narrow lanes or over pergolas of yellowing vines. Their whitewashed walls were hung with photographs of friends and foreigners, many of them souvenirs from English or American employers. The men, in broad black hats and lilac shirts, sat round the table, girt with the red waist-wrapper, or *fascia*, which marks the ancient faction of the Castellani. The other faction, called Nicolotti, are distinguished by a black *assisa*. The quarters of the town are divided unequally and irregularly into these two parties. What was once a formidable rivalry between two sections of the Venetian populace, still survives in challenges to trials of strength and skill upon the water. The women, in their many-coloured kerchiefs, stirred polenta at the smoke-blackened chimney, whose huge pent-house roof projects two feet or more across the hearth. When they had served the table they took their seat on low stools, knitted stockings, or drank out of glasses handed across the shoulder to them by their lords. Some of these women were clearly notable housewives, and I have no reason to suppose that they do not take their full share of the housework. Boys and girls came in and out, and got a portion of

the dinner to consume where they thought best. Children went tottering about upon the red-brick floor, the playthings of those hulking fellows, who handled them very gently and spoke kindly in a sort of confidential whisper to their ears. These little ears were mostly pierced for earrings, and the light blue eyes of the urchins peeped maliciously beneath shocks of yellow hair. A dog was often of the party. He ate fish like his masters, and was made to beg for it by sitting up and rowing with his paws. *Voga, Azzò, voga!* The Anzolo who talked thus to his little brown Spitz-dog has the hoarse voice of a Triton and the movement of an animated sea-wave. Azzo performed his trick, swallowed his fish-bones, and the fiery Anzolo looked round approvingly.

On all these occasions I have found these gondoliers the same sympathetic, industrious, cheery affectionate folk. They live in many respects a hard and precarious life. The winter in particular is a time of anxiety, and sometimes of privation, even to the well-to-do among them. Work then is scarce, and what there is, is rendered disagreeable to them by the cold. Yet they take their chance with facile temper, and are not soured by hardships. The amenities of the Venetian sea and air, the healthiness of the lagoons, the cheerful bustle of the poorer quarters, the brilliancy of this Southern sunlight, and the beauty which is everywhere apparent, must be reckoned as important factors in the formation of their character. And of that character, as I have said, the final note is playfulness. In spite of difficulties, their life has never been stern enough to sadden them. Bare necessities are marvellously cheap, and the pinch of real bad weather—such frost as locked the lagoons in ice two years ago, or such south-western gales as flooded the basement floors of all the houses on the Zattere—is rare and does not last long. On the other hand, their life has never been so lazy as to reduce them to the savagery of the traditional Neapolitan lazzaroni. They have had to work



daily for small earnings, but under favourable conditions, and their labour has been lightened by much good-fellowship among themselves, by the amusements of their *feste* and their singing clubs.

Of course it is not easy for a stranger in a very different social position to feel that he has been admitted to their confidence. Italians have an ineradicable habit of making themselves externally agreeable, of bending in all indifferent matters to the whims and wishes of superiors, and of saying what they think *Signori* like. This habit, while it smoothes the surface of existence, raises up a barrier of compliment and partial insincerity, against which the more downright natures of us Northern folk break in vain efforts. Our advances are met with an imperceptible but impermeable resistance by the very people who are bent on making the world pleasant to us. It is the very reverse of that dour opposition which a Lowland Scot or a North English peasant offers to familiarity; but it is hardly less insurmountable. The treatment, again, which Venetians of the lower class have received through centuries from their own nobility, makes attempts at fraternisation on the part of gentlemen unintelligible to them. The best way, here and elsewhere, of overcoming these obstacles is to have some bond of work or interest in common—of service on the one side rendered, and goodwill on the other honestly displayed. The men of whom I have been speaking will, I am convinced, not shirk their share of duty or make unreasonable claims upon the generosity of their employers.

## *A CINQUE CENTO BRUTUS.*

### I.—THE SESTIERE DI SAN POLO.

THERE is a quarter of Venice not much visited by tourists, lying as it does outside their beat, away from the Rialto, at a considerable distance from the Frari and San Rocco, in what might almost pass for a city separated by a hundred miles from the Piazza. This is the quarter of San Polo, one corner of which, somewhere between the back of the Palazzo Foscari and the Campo di San Polo, was the scene of a memorable act of vengeance in the year 1546. Here Lorenzino dei Medici, the murderer of his cousin Alessandro, was at last tracked down and put to death by paid cut-throats. How they succeeded in their purpose, we know in every detail from the narrative dictated by the chief assassin. His story so curiously illustrates the conditions of life in Italy three centuries ago, that I have thought it worthy of abridgment. But, in order to make it intelligible, and to paint the manners of the times more fully, I must first relate the series of events which led to Lorenzino's murder of his cousin Alessandro, and from that to his own subsequent assassination. Lorenzino dei Medici, the Florentine Brutus of the sixteenth century, is the hero of the tragedy. Some of his relatives, however, must first appear upon the scene before he enters with a patriot's knife concealed beneath a court-fool's bauble.

### II.—THE MURDER OF IPPOLITO DEI MEDICI.

After the final extinction of the Florentine Republic, the hopes of the Medici, who now aspired to the dukedom of

Tuscany, rested on three bastards—Alessandro, the reputed child of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino ; Ippolito, the natural son of Giuliano, Duke of Nemours ; and Giulio, the offspring of an elder Giuliano, who was at this time Pope, with the title of Clement VII. Clement had seen Rome sacked in 1527 by a horde of freebooters fighting under the Imperial standard, and had used the remnant of these troops, commanded by the Prince of Orange, to crush his native city in the memorable siege of 1529-30. He now determined to rule Florence from the Papal chair by the help of the two bastard cousins I have named. Alessandro was created Duke of Cività di Penna, and sent to take the first place in the city. Ippolito was made a cardinal ; since the Medici had learned that Rome was the real basis of their power, and it was undoubtedly in Clement's policy to advance this scion of his house to the Papacy. The sole surviving representative of the great Lorenzo de' Medici's legitimate blood was Catherine, daughter of the Duke of Urbino by Madeleine de la Tour d'Auvergne. She was pledged in marriage to the Duke of Orleans, who was afterwards Henry II. of France. A natural daughter of the Emperor Charles V. was provided for her putative half-brother Alessandro. By means of these alliances the succession of Ippolito to the Papal chair would have been secured, and the strength of the Medici would have been confirmed in Tuscany, but for the disasters which have now to be related.

Between the cousins Alessandro and Ippolito there was no love lost. As boys, they had both played the part of princes in Florence under the guardianship of the Cardinal Passerini da Cortona. The higher rank had then been given to Ippolito, who bore the title of Magnifico, and seemed thus designated for the lordship of the city. Ippolito, though only half a Medici, was of more authentic lineage than Alessandro ; for no proof positive could be adduced that the latter was even a spurious child of the Duke of Urbino. He bore obvious

witness to his mother's blood upon his mulatto's face ; but this mother was the wife of a groom, and it was certain that in the court of Urbino she had not been chary of her favours. The old magnificence of taste, the patronage of art and letters, and the preference for liberal studies which distinguished Casa Medici, survived in Ippolito ; whereas Alessandro manifested only the brutal lusts of a debauched tyrant. It was therefore with great reluctance that, moved by reasons of state and domestic policy, Ippolito saw himself compelled to accept the scarlet hat. Alessandro having been recognised as a son of the Duke of Urbino, had become half-brother to the future Queen of France. To treat him as the head of the family was a necessity thrust, in the extremity of the Medicean fortunes, upon Clement. Ippolito, who more entirely represented the spirit of the house, was driven to assume the position of a cadet, with all the uncertainties of an ecclesiastical career.

In these circumstances Ippolito had not strength of character to sacrifice himself for the consolidation of the Medicean power, which could only have been effected by maintaining a close bond of union between its members. The death of Clement in 1534 obscured his prospects in the Church. He was still too young to intrigue for the tiara. The new Pope, Alessandro Farnese, soon after his election, displayed a vigour which was unexpected from his age, together with a nepotism which his previous character had scarcely warranted. The Cardinal de' Medici felt himself excluded and oppressed. He joined the party of those numerous Florentine exiles, headed by Filippo Strozzi, and the Cardinals Salviati and Ridolfi, all of whom were connected by marriage with the legitimate Medici, and who unanimously hated and were jealous of the Duke of Civit  di Penna. On the score of policy it is difficult to condemn this step. Alessandro's hold upon Florence was still precarious, nor had he yet married Margaret of Austria. Perhaps Ippolito was right



in thinking he had less to gain from his cousin than from the anti-Medicean faction and the princes of the Church who favoured it. But he did not play his cards well. He quarrelled with the new Pope, Paul III., and by his vacillations led the Florentine exiles to suspect he might betray them.

In the summer of 1535 Ippolito was at Itri, a little town not far from Gaeta and Terracina, within easy reach of Fondi, where dwelt the beautiful Giulia Gonzaga. To this lady the Cardinal paid assiduous court, passing his time with her in the romantic scenery of that world-famous Capuan coast. On the 5th of August his seneschal, Giovann' Andrea, of Borgo San Sepolcro, brought him a bowl of chicken-broth, after drinking which he exclaimed to one of his attendants, "I have been poisoned, and the man who did it is Giovann' Andrea." The seneschal was taken and tortured, and confessed that he had mixed a poison with the broth. Four days afterwards the Cardinal died, and a post-mortem examination showed that the omentum had been eaten by some corrosive substance. Giovann' Andrea was sent in chains to Rome; but in spite of his confession, more than once repeated, the court released him. He immediately took refuge with Alessandro de' Medici in Florence, whence he repaired to Borgo San Sepolcro, and was, at the close of a few months, there murdered by the people of the place. From these circumstances it was conjectured, not without good reason, that Alessandro had procured his cousin's death; and a certain Captain Pignatta, of low birth in Florence, a bravo and a coward, was believed to have brought the poison to Itri from the Duke. The Medicean courtiers at Florence did not disguise their satisfaction; and one of them exclaimed, with reference to the event, "We know how to brush flies from our noses!"

## III.—THE MURDER OF ALESSANDRO DE' MEDICI.

Having removed his cousin and rival from the scene, Alessandro de' Medici plunged with even greater effrontery into the cruelties and debaucheries which made him odious in Florence. It seemed as though fortune meant to smile on him; for in this same year (1535) Charles V. decided at Naples in his favour against the Florentine exiles, who were pleading their own cause and that of the city injured by his tyrannies; and in February of the following year he married Margaret of Austria, the Emperor's natural daughter. Francesco Guicciardini, the first statesman and historian of his age, had undertaken his defence, and was ready to support him by advice and countenance in the conduct of his government. Within the lute of this prosperity, however, there was one little rift. For some months past he had closely attached to his person a certain kinsman, Lorenzo dei Medici, who was descended in the fourth generation from Lorenzo, the brother of Cosimo Pater Patriæ. This Lorenzo, or Lorenzino, or Lorenzaccio, as his most intimate acquaintances called him, was destined to murder Alessandro; and it is worthy of notice that the Duke had received frequent warnings of his fate. A Perugian page, for instance, who suffered from some infirmity, saw in a dream that Lorenzino would kill his master. Astrologers predicted that the Duke must die by having his throat cut. One of them is said to have named Lorenzo dei Medici as the assassin; and another described him so accurately that there was no mistaking the man. Moreover, Madonna Lucrezia Salviati wrote to the Duke from Rome that he should beware of a certain person, indicating Lorenzino; and her daughter, Madonna Maria, told him to his face she hated the young man, "because I know he means to murder you, and murder you he will." Nor was this all.

The Duke's favourite body-servants mistrusted Lorenzino. On one occasion, when Alessandro and Lorenzino, attended by a certain Giomo, were escalading a wall at night, as was their wont upon illicit love-adventures, Giomo whispered to his master: "Ah, my lord, do let me cut the rope, and rid ourselves of him!" To which the Duke replied: "No, I do not want this; but if he could, I know he'd twist it round my neck."

In spite, then, of these warnings and the want of confidence he felt, the Duke continually lived with Lorenzino, employing him as pander in his intrigues, and preferring his society to that of simpler men. When he rode abroad, he took this evil friend upon his crupper; although he knew for certain that Lorenzino had stolen a tight-fitting vest of mail he used to wear, and, while his arms were round his waist, was always meditating how to stick a poignard in his body. He trusted, so it seems, to his own great strength and to the other's physical weakness.

At this point, since Lorenzino is the principal actor in the two-act drama which follows, it will be well to introduce him to the reader in the words of Varchi, who was personally acquainted with him. Born at Florence in 1514, he was left early by his father's death to the sole care of his mother, Maria Soderini, "a lady of rare prudence and goodness, who attended with the utmost pains and diligence to his education. No, sooner, however, had he acquired the rudiments of humane learning, which, being of very quick parts, he imbibed with incredible facility, than he began to display a restless mind, insatiable and appetitive of vice. Soon afterwards, under the rule and discipline of Filippo Strozzi, he made open sport of all things human and divine; and preferring the society of low persons, who not only flattered him but were congenial to his tastes, he gave free rein to his desires, especially in affairs of love, without regard for sex or age or quality, and in his

secret soul, while he lavished feigned caresses upon every one he saw, felt no esteem for any living being. He thirsted strangely for glory, and omitted no point of deed or word that might, he thought, procure him the reputation of a man of spirit or of wit. He was lean of person, somewhat slightly built, and on this account people called him *Lorenzino*. He never laughed, but had a sneering smile; and although he was rather distinguished by grace than beauty, his countenance being dark and melancholy, still in the flower of his age he was beloved beyond all measure by Pope Clement; in spite of which he had it in his mind (according to what he said himself after killing the Duke Alessandro) to have murdered him. He brought Francesco di Raffaello dei Medici, the Pope's rival, who was a young man of excellent attainments and the highest hope, to such extremity that he lost his wits, and became the sport of the whole court at Rome, and was sent back, as a lesser evil, as a confirmed madman to Florence." Varchi proceeds to relate how *Lorenzino* fell into disfavour with the Pope and the Romans by chopping the heads off statues from the arch of Constantine and other monuments; for which act of vandalism *Molsa* impeached him in the Roman Academy, and a price was set upon his head. Having returned to Florence, he proceeded to court Duke Alessandro, into whose confidence he wormed himself, pretending to play the spy upon the exiles, and affecting a personal timidity which put the Prince off his guard. Alessandro called him "the philosopher," because he conversed in solitude with his own thoughts and seemed indifferent to wealth and office. But all this while *Lorenzino* was plotting how to murder him.

Giovio's account of this strange intimacy may be added, since it completes the picture I have drawn from Varchi:—"Lorenzo made himself the accomplice and instrument of those amorous amusements for which the Duke had an



insatiable appetite, with the object of deceiving him. He was singularly well furnished with all the scoundrelly arts and trained devices of the pander's trade; composed fine verses to incite to lust; wrote and represented comedies in Italian; and pretended to take pleasure only in such tricks and studies. Therefore he never carried arms like other courtiers, and feigned to be afraid of blood, a man who sought tranquillity at any price. Besides, he bore a pallid countenance and melancholy brow, walking alone, talking very little and with few persons. He haunted solitary places apart from the city, and showed such plain signs of hypochondria that some began covertly to pass jokes on him. Certain others, who were more acute, suspected that he was harbouring and devising in his mind some terrible enterprise." The Prologue to Lorenzino's own comedy of *Aridosiso* brings the sardonic, sneering, ironical man vividly before us. He calls himself "un certo omiciatto, che non è nessun di voi che veggendolo non l'avesse a noia, pensando che egli abbia fatto una commedia;" and begs the audience to damn his play to save him the tedium of writing another. Criticised by the light of his subsequent actions, this prologue may even be understood to contain a covert promise of the murder he was meditating.

"In this way," writes Varchi, "the Duke had taken such familiarity with Lorenzo, that, not content with making use of him as a ruffian in his dealings with women, whether religious or secular, maidens or wives or widows, noble or plebeian, young or elderly, as it might happen, he applied to him to procure for his pleasure a half-sister of Lorenzo's own mother, a young lady of marvellous beauty, but not less chaste than beautiful, who was the wife of Lionardo Ginori, and lived not far from the back entrance to the palace of the Medici." Lorenzino undertook this odious commission, seeing an opportunity to work his designs against the Duke. But first he had to form an accomplice, since he could not hope to carry out

the murder without help. A bravo, called Michele del Tavo-laccino, but better known by the nickname of Scoroconcolo, struck him as a fitting instrument. He had procured this man's pardon for a homicide, and it appears that the fellow retained a certain sense of gratitude. Lorenzino began by telling the man there was a courtier who put insults upon him, and Scoroconcolo professed his readiness to kill the knave. "*Sia chi si voglia ; io l'ammazzerò, se fosse Cristo.*" Up to the last minute the name of Alessandro was not mentioned. Having thus secured his assistant, Lorenzino chose a night when he knew that Alessandro Vitelli, captain of the Duke's guard, would be from home. Then, after supper, he whispered in Alessandro's ear that at last he had seduced his aunt with an offer of money, and that she would come to his, Lorenzo's chamber at the service of the Duke that night. Only the Duke must appear at the rendezvous alone, and when he had arrived, the lady should be fetched. "Certain it is," says Varchi, "that the Duke, having donned a cloak of satin in the Neapolitan style, lined with sable, when he went to take his gloves, and there were some of mail and some of perfumed leather, hesitated awhile and said: 'Which shall I choose, those of war, or those of love-making?'" He took the latter and went out with only four attendants, three of whom he dismissed upon the Piazza di San Marco, while one was stationed just opposite Lorenzo's house, with strict orders not to stir if he should see folk enter or issue thence. But this fellow, called the Hungarian, after waiting a great while, returned to the Duke's chamber, and there went to sleep.

Meanwhile Lorenzino received Alessandro in his bedroom, where there was a good fire. The Duke unbuckled his sword, which Lorenzino took, and having entangled the belt with the hilt, so that it should not readily be drawn, laid it on the pillow. The Duke had flung himself already on the bed, and

hid himself among the curtains—doing this, it is supposed, to save himself from the trouble of paying compliments to the lady when she should arrive. For Caterina Ginori had the fame of a fair speaker, and Alessandro was aware of his own incapacity to play the part of a respectful lover. Nothing could more strongly point the man's brutality than this act, which contributed in no small measure to his ruin.

Lorenzino left the Duke upon the bed, and went at once for Scoronconcolo. He told him that the enemy was caught, and bade him only mind the work he had to do. "That will I do," the bravo answered, "even though it were the Duke himself." "You've hit the mark," said Lorenzino with a face of joy; "he cannot slip through our fingers. Come!" So they mounted to the bedroom, and Lorenzino, knowing where the Duke was laid, cried: "Sir, are you asleep?" and therewith ran him through the back. Alessandro was sleeping, or pretending to sleep, face downwards, and the sword passed through his kidneys and diaphragm. But it did not kill him. He slipped from the bed, and seized a stool to parry the next blow. Scoronconcolo now stabbed him in the face, while Lorenzino forced him back upon the bed; and then began a hideous struggle. In order to prevent his cries, Lorenzino doubled his fist into the Duke's mouth. Alessandro seized the thumb between his teeth, and held it in a vice until he died. This disabled Lorenzino, who still lay upon his victim's body, and Scoronconcolo could not strike for fear of wounding his master. Between the writhing couple he made, however, several passes with his sword, which only pierced the mattress. Then he drew a knife and drove it into the Duke's throat, and bored about till he had severed veins and windpipe.

## IV.—THE FLIGHT OF LORENZINO DEI MEDICI.

Alessandro was dead. His body fell to earth. The two murderers, drenched with blood, lifted it up, and placed it on the bed, wrapped in the curtains, as they had found him first. Then Lorenzino went to the window, which looked out upon the Via Larga, and opened it to rest and breathe a little air. After this he called for Scoronconcolo's boy, Il Freccia, and bade him look upon the dead man. Il Freccia recognised the Duke. But why Lorenzino did this, no one knew. It seemed, as Varchi says, that, having planned the murder with great ability, and executed it with daring, his good sense and good luck forsook him. He made no use of the crime he had committed; and from that day forward till his own assassination, nothing prospered with him. Indeed, the murder of Alessandro appears to have been almost motiveless, considered from the point of view of practical politics. Varchi assumes that Lorenzino's burning desire of glory prompted the deed; and when he had acquired the notoriety he sought, there was an end to his ambition. This view is confirmed by the Apology he wrote and published for his act. It remains one of the most pregnant, bold, and brilliant pieces of writing which we possess in favour of tyrannicide from that epoch of insolent crime and audacious rhetoric. So energetic is the style, and so biting the invective of this masterpiece, in which the author stabs a second time his victim, that both Giordani and Leopardi affirmed it to be the only true monument of eloquence in the Italian language. If thirst for glory was Lorenzino's principal incentive, immediate glory was his guerdon. He escaped that same night with Scoronconcolo and Freccia to Bologna, where he stayed to dress his thumb, and then passed forward to Venice. Filippo Strozzi there welcomed him as the new Brutus, gave him money, and



promised to marry his two sons to the two sisters of the tyrant-killer. Poems were written and published by the most famous men of letters, including Benedetto Varchi and Francesco Maria Molsa, in praise of the Tuscan Brutus, the liberator of his country from a tyrant. A bronze medal was struck bearing his name, with a profile copied from Michelangelo's bust of Brutus. On the obverse are two daggers and a cup, and the date viii. id. Jan.

The immediate consequence of Alessandro's murder was the elevation of Cosimo, son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, and second cousin of Lorenzino, to the duchy. At the ceremony of his investiture with the ducal honours, Cosimo solemnly undertook to revenge Alessandro's murder. In the following March he buried his predecessor with pomp in San Lorenzo. The body was placed beside the bones of the Duke of Urbino in the marble chest of Michelangelo, and here not many years ago it was discovered. Soon afterwards Lorenzino was declared a rebel. His portrait was painted according to old Tuscan precedent, head downwards, and suspended by one foot, upon the wall of the fort built by Alessandro. His house was cut in twain from roof to pavement, and a narrow lane was driven through it, which received the title of Traitor's Alley, *Chiasso del Traditore*. The price of four thousand golden florins was put upon his head, together with the further sum of one hundred florins per annum in perpetuity to be paid to the murderer and his direct heirs in succession, by the Otto di Balìa. Moreover, the man who killed Lorenzino was to enjoy all civic privileges; exemption from all taxes, ordinary and extraordinary; the right of carrying arms, together with two attendants, in the city and the whole domain of Florence; and the further prerogative of restoring ten outlaws at his choice. If Lorenzino could be captured and brought alive to Florence, the whole of this reward would be doubled.

This decree was promulgated in April 1537, and thenceforward Lorenzino de' Medici lived a doomed man. The assassin, who had been proclaimed a Brutus by Tuscan exiles and humanistic enthusiasts, was regarded as a Judas by the common people. Ballads were written on him with the title of the "Piteous and sore lament made unto himself by Lorenzino de' Medici, who murdered the most illustrious Duke Alessandro." He had become a wild beast, whom it was honourable to hunt down, a pest which it was righteous to extirpate. Yet fate delayed nine years to overtake him. What remains to be told about his story must be extracted from the narrative of the bravo who succeeded, with the aid of an accomplice, in dispatching him at Venice.\* So far as possible, I shall use the man's own words, translating them literally, and omitting only unimportant details. The narrative throws brilliant light upon the manners and movements of professional cut-throats at that period in Italy. It seems to have been taken down from the hero Francesco, or Cecco, Bibboni's lips; and there is no doubt that we possess in it a valuable historical document for the illustration of contemporary customs. It offers in all points a curious parallel to Cellini's account of his own homicides and hair-breadth escapes. Moreover, it is confirmed in its minutest circumstances by the records of the criminal courts of Venice in the sixteenth century. This I can attest from recent examination of MSS. relating to the *Signori di Notte* and the *Esecutori Contro la Bestemmia*, which are preserved among the Archives at the Frari.

\* Those who are interested in such matters may profitably compare this description of a planned murder in the sixteenth century with the account written by Ambrogio Tremazzi of the way in which he tracked and slew Troilo Orsini in Paris in the year 1577. It is given by Gnoli in his *Vittoria Accoramboni*, pp. 404-414.

## V.—THE MURDER OF LORENZINO DEI MEDICI.

"When I returned from Germany," begins Bibboni, "where I had been in the pay of the Emperor, I found at Vicenza Bebo da Volterra, who was staying in the house of M. Antonio da Roma, a nobleman of that city. This gentleman employed him because of a great feud he had; and he was mighty pleased, moreover, at my coming, and desired that I too should take up my quarters in his palace."

This paragraph strikes the keynote of the whole narrative, and introduces us to the company we are about to keep. The noblemen of that epoch, if they had private enemies, took into their service soldiers of adventure, partly to protect their persons, but also to make war, when occasion offered, on their foes. The *bravi*, as they were styled, had quarters assigned them in the basement of the palace, where they might be seen swaggering about the door or flaunting their gay clothes behind the massive iron bars of the windows which opened on the streets. When their master went abroad at night they followed him, and were always at hand to perform secret services in love affairs, assassination, and espial. For the rest, they haunted taverns, and kept up correspondence with prostitutes. An Italian city had a whole population of such fellows, the offscourings of armies, drawn from all nations, divided by their allegiance of the time being into hostile camps, but united by community of interest and occupation, and ready to combine against the upper class, upon whose vices, enmities, and cowardice they thrive.

Bibboni proceeds to say how another gentleman of Vicenza, M. Francesco Manente, had at this time a feud with certain of the Guazzi and the Laschi, which had lasted several years, and cost the lives of many members of both parties and their following. M. Francesco being a friend of M. Antonio,

besought that gentleman to lend him Bibboni and Bebo for a season; and the two *bravi* went together with their new master to Celsano, a village in the neighbourhood. "There both parties had estates, and all of them kept armed men in their houses, so that not a day passed without feats of arms, and always there was some one killed or wounded. One day, soon afterwards, the leaders of our party resolved to attack the foe in their house, where we killed two, and the rest, numbering five men, entrenched themselves in a ground-floor apartment; whereupon we took possession of their harquebusses and other arms, which forced them to abandon the villa and retire to Vicenza; and within a short space of time this great feud was terminated by an ample peace." After this Bebo took service with the Rector of the University in Padua, and was transferred by his new patron to Milan. Bibboni remained at Vicenza with M. Galeazzo della Seta, who stood in great fear of his life, notwithstanding the peace which had been concluded between the two factions. At the end of ten months he returned to M. Antonio da Roma and his six brothers, "all of whom being very much attached to me, they proposed that I should live my life with them, for good or ill, and be treated as one of the family; upon the understanding that if war broke out and I wanted to take part in it, I should always have twenty-five crowns and arms and horse, with welcome home, so long as I lived; and in case I did not care to join the troops, the same provision for my maintenance."

From these details we comprehend the sort of calling which a bravo of Bibboni's species followed. Meanwhile Bebo was at Milan. "There it happened that M. Francesco Vinta, of Volterra, was on embassy from the Duke of Florence. He saw Bebo, and asked him what he was doing in Milan, and Bebo answered that he was a knight errant." This phrase, derived no doubt from the romantic epics then in vogue, was



a pretty euphemism for a rogue of Bebo's quality. The ambassador now began cautiously to sound his man, who seems to have been outlawed from the Tuscan duchy, telling him he knew a way by which he might return with favour to his home, and at last disclosing the affair of Lorenzo. Bebo was puzzled at first, but when he understood the matter, he professed his willingness, took letters from the envoy to the Duke of Florence, and, in a private audience with Cosimo, informed him that he was ready to attempt Lorenzino's assassination. He added that "he had a comrade fit for such a job, whose fellow for the business could not easily be found."

Bebo now travelled to Vicenza, and opened the whole matter to Bibboni, who weighed it well, and at last, being convinced that the Duke's commission to his comrade was *bonâ fide*, determined to take his share in the undertaking. The two agreed to have no accomplices. They went to Venice, and "I," says Bibboni, "being most intimately acquainted with all that city, and provided there with many friends, soon quietly contrived to know where Lorenzino lodged, and took a room in the neighbourhood, and spent some days in seeing how we best might rule our conduct." Bibboni soon discovered that Lorenzino never left his palace; and he therefore remained in much perplexity, until, by good luck, Ruberto Strozzi arrived from France in Venice, bringing in his train a Navarrese servant, who had the nickname of Spagnoletto. This fellow was a great friend of the bravo. They met, and Bibboni told him that he should like to go and kiss the hands of Messer Ruberto, whom he had known in Rome. Strozzi inhabited the same palace as Lorenzino. "When we arrived there, both Messer Ruberto and Lorenzo were leaving the house, and there were around them so many gentlemen and other persons, that I could not present myself, and both straightway stepped into the gondola. Then I, not having seen Lorenzo for a long while past, and because

he was very quietly attired, could not recognise the man exactly, but only as it were between certainty and doubt. Wherefore I said to Spagnoletto, 'I think I know that gentleman, but don't remember where I saw him.' And Messer Ruberto was giving him his right hand. Then Spagnoletto answered, 'You know him well enough; he is Messer Lorenzo. But see you tell this to nobody. He goes by the name of Messer Dario, because he lives in great fear for his safety, and people don't know that he is now in Venice.' I answered that I marvelled much, and if I could have helped him, would have done so willingly. Then I asked where they were going, and he said, to dine with Messer Giovanni della Casa, who was the Pope's Legate. I did not leave the man till I had drawn from him all I required."

Thus spoke the Italian Judas. The appearance of La Casa on the scene is interesting. He was the celebrated author of the scandalous *Capitolo del Forno*, the author of many sublime and melancholy sonnets, who was now at Venice prosecuting a charge of heresy against Pier Paolo Vergerio, and paying his addresses to a noble lady of the Quirini family. It seems that on the territory of San Marco he made common cause with the exiles from Florence, for he was himself by birth a Florentine, and he had no objection to take Brutus-Lorenzino by the hand.

After the noblemen had rowed off in their gondola to dine with the Legate, Bibboni and his friend entered their palace, where he found another old acquaintance, the house-steward, or *spenditore* of Lorenzo. From him he gathered much useful information. Pietro Strozzi, it seems, had allowed the tyrannicide one thousand five hundred crowns a year, with the keep of three brave and daring companions (*tre compagni bravi e facinorosi*), and a palace worth fifty crowns on lease. But Lorenzo had just taken another on the Campo di San Polo at three hundred crowns a year, for which swagger

(*altura*) Pietro Strozzi had struck a thousand crowns off his allowance. Bibboni also learned that he was keeping house with his uncle, Alessandro Soderini, another Florentine outlaw, and that he was ardently in love with a certain beautiful Barozza. This woman was apparently one of the grand courtesans of Venice. He further ascertained the date when he was going to move into the palace at San Polo, and, "to put it briefly, knew everything he did, and, as it were, how many times a day he spit." Such were the intelligences of the servants' hall, and of such value were they to men of Bibboni's calling.

In the Carnival of 1546 Lorenzo meant to go masqued in the habit of a gipsy woman to the square of San Spirito, where there was to be a joust. Great crowds of people would assemble, and Bibboni hoped to do his business there. The assassination, however, failed on this occasion, and Lorenzo took up his abode in the palace he had hired upon the Campo di San Polo. This Campo is one of the largest open places in Venice, shaped irregularly, with a finely curving line upon the western side, where two of the noblest private houses in the city are still standing. Nearly opposite these, in the south-western angle, stands, detached, the little old church of San Polo. One of its side entrances opens upon the square; the other on a lane, which leads eventually to the Frari. There is nothing in Bibboni's narrative to make it clear where Lorenzo hired his dwelling. But it would seem from certain things which he says later on, that in order to enter the church his victim had to cross the square. Meanwhile Bibboni took the precaution of making friends with a shoemaker, whose shop commanded the whole Campo, including Lorenzo's palace. In this shop he began to spend much of his time; "and oftentimes I feigned to be asleep; but God knows whether I was sleeping, for my mind, at any rate, was wide-awake."

A second convenient occasion for murdering Lorenzo soon seemed to offer. He was bidden to dine with Monsignor della Casa ; and Bibboni, putting a bold face on, entered the Legate's palace, having left Bebo below in the loggia, fully resolved to do the business. "But we found," he says, "that they had gone to dine at Murano, so that we remained with our tabors in their bag." The island of Murano at that period was a favourite resort of the Venetian nobles, especially of the more literary and artistic, who kept country-houses there, where they enjoyed the fresh air of the lagoons and the quiet of their gardens.

The third occasion, after all these weeks of watching, brought success to Bibboni's schemes. He had observed how Lorenzo occasionally so far broke his rules of caution as to go on foot, past the church of San Polo, to visit the beautiful Barozza ; and he resolved, if possible, to catch him on one of these journeys. "It so chanced on the 28th of February, which was the second Sunday of Lent, that having gone, as was my wont, to pry out whether Lorenzo would give orders for going abroad that day, I entered the shoemaker's shop, and stayed awhile, until Lorenzo came to the window with a napkin round his neck—for he was combing his hair—and at the same moment I saw a certain Giovan Battista Martelli, who kept his sword for the defence of Lorenzo's person, enter and come forth again. Concluding that they would probably go abroad, I went home to get ready and procure the necessary weapons, and there I found Bebo asleep in bed, and made him get up at once, and we came to our accustomed post of observation, by the church of San Polo, where our men would have to pass." Bibboni now retired to his friend the shoemaker's, and Bebo took up his station at one of the side-doors of San Polo ; "and, as good luck would have it, Giovan Battista Martelli came forth, and walked a piece in front, and then Lorenzo came, and then Alessandro



Soderini, going the one behind the other, like storks, and Lorenzo, on entering the church, and lifting up the curtain of the door, was seen from the opposite door by Bebo, who at the same time noticed how I had left the shop, and so we met upon the street as we had agreed, and he told me that Lorenzo was inside the church."

To any one who knows the Campo di San Polo, it will be apparent that Lorenzo had crossed from the western side of the piazza and entered the church by what is technically called its northern door. Bebo, stationed at the southern door, could see him when he pushed the heavy *stoia* or leather curtain aside, and at the same time could observe Bibboni's movements in the cobbler's shop. Meanwhile Lorenzo walked across the church and came to the same door where Bebo had been standing. "I saw him issue from the church and take the main street ; then came Alessandro Soderini, and I walked last of all ; and when we reached the point we had determined on, I jumped in front of Alessandro with the poignard in my hand, crying, ' Hold hard, Alessandro, and get along with you in God's name, for we are not here for you ! ' He then threw himself around my waist, and grasped my arms, and kept on calling out. Seeing how wrong I had been to try to spare his life, I wrenched myself as well as I could from his grip, and with my lifted poignard struck him, as God willed, above the eyebrow, and a little blood trickled from the wound. He, in high fury, gave me such a thrust that I fell backward, and the ground besides was slippery from having rained a little. Then Alessandro drew his sword, which he carried in its scabbard, and thrust at me in front, and struck me on the corslet, which for my good fortune was of double mail. Before I could get ready I received three passes, which, had I worn a doublet instead of that mailed corslet, would certainly have run me through. At the fourth pass I had regained my strength and spirit, and closed with

him, and stabbed him four times in the head, and being so close he could not use his sword, but tried to parry with his hand and hilt, and I, as God willed, struck him at the wrist below the sleeve of mail, and cut his hand off clean, and gave him then one last stroke on his head. Thereupon he begged for God's sake spare his life, and I, in trouble about Bebo, left him in the arms of a Venetian nobleman, who held him back from jumping into the canal."

Who this Venetian nobleman, found unexpectedly upon the scene, was, does not appear. Nor, what is still more curious, do we hear anything of that Martelli, the bravo, "who kept his sword for the defence of Lorenzo's person." The one had arrived accidentally, it seems. The other must have been a coward and escaped from the scuffle.

"When I turned," proceeds Bibboni, "I found Lorenzo on his knees. He raised himself, and I, in anger, gave him a great cut across the head, which split it in two pieces, and laid him at my feet, and he never rose again."

## VI.—THE ESCAPE OF THE BRAVI.

Bebo, meanwhile, had made off from the scene of action. And Bibboni, taking to his heels, came up with him in the little square of San Marcello. They now ran for their lives till they reached the *traghetto* di San Spirito, where they threw their poignards into the water, remembering that no man might carry these in Venice under penalty of the galleys. Bibboni's white hose were drenched with blood. He therefore agreed to separate from Bebo, having named a rendezvous. Left alone, his ill luck brought him face to face with twenty constables (*sbirri*). "In a moment I conceived that they knew everything, and were come to capture me, and of a truth I saw that it was over with me. As swiftly as I could I quickened pace and got into a church, near to which was

the house of a Compagnia, and the one opened into the other, and knelt down and prayed, commending myself with fervour to God for my deliverance and safety. Yet while I prayed, I kept my eyes well open and saw the whole band pass the church, except one man who entered, and I strained my sight so that I seemed to see behind as well as in front, and then it was I longed for my poignard, for I should not have heeded being in a church." But the constable, it soon appeared, was not looking for Bibboni. So he gathered up his courage, and ran for the Church of San Spirito, where the Padre Andrea Volterrano was preaching to a great congregation. He hoped to go in by one door and out by the other, but the crowd prevented him, and he had to turn back and face the *sbirri*. One of them followed him, having probably caught sight of the blood upon his hose. Then Bibboni resolved to have done with the fellow, and rushed at him, and flung him down with his head upon the pavement, and ran like mad, and came at last, all out of breath, to San Marco.

It seems clear that before Bibboni separated from Bebo they had crossed the water, for the Sestiere di San Polo is separated from the Sestiere di San Marco by the Grand Canal. And this they must have done at the traghetto di San Spirito. Neither the church nor the traghetto are now in existence, and this part of the story is therefore obscure.\* Having reached San Marco, he took a gondola at the Ponte della Paglia, where tourists are now wont to stand and contemplate the Ducal Palace and the Bridge of Sighs. First, he

\* So far as I can discover, the only church of San Spirito in Venice was a building on the island of San Spirito, erected by Sansavino, which belonged to the Sestiere di S. Croce, and which was suppressed in 1656. Its plate and the fine pictures which Titian painted there were transferred at that date to S. M. della Salute. I cannot help inferring that either Bibboni's memory failed him, or that his words were wrongly understood by printer or amanuensis. If for S. Spirito we substitute S. Stefano, the account would be intelligible.

sought the house of a woman of the town who was his friend ; then changed purpose, and rowed to the palace of the Count Salici da Collalto. " He was a great friend and intimate of ours, because Bebo and I had done him many and great services in times passed. There I knocked ; and Bebo opened the door, and when he saw me dabbled with blood, he marvelled that I had not come to grief and fallen into the hands of justice, and, indeed, had feared as much because I had remained so long away." It appears, therefore, that the Palazzo Collalto was their rendezvous. " The Count was from home ; but being known to all his people, I played the master and went into the kitchen to the fire, and with soap and water turned my hose, which had been white, to a grey colour." This is a very delicate way of saying that he washed out the blood of Alessandro and Lorenzo !

Soon after the Count returned, and "lavished caresses" upon Bebo and his precious comrade. They did not tell him what they had achieved that morning, but put him off with a story of having settled a *sbirro* in a quarrel about a girl. Then the Count invited them to dinner ; and being himself bound to entertain the first physician of Venice, requested them to take it in an upper chamber. He and his secretary served them with their own hands at table. When the physician arrived, the Count went down-stairs ; and at this moment a messenger came from Lorenzo's mother, begging the doctor to go at once to San Polo, for that her son had been murdered and Soderini wounded to the death. It was now no longer possible to conceal their doings from the Count, who told them to pluck up courage and abide in patience. He had himself to dine and take his siesta, and then to attend a meeting of the Council.

About the hour of vespers, Bibboni determined to seek better refuge. Followed at a discreet distance by Bebo, he first called at their lodgings and ordered supper. Two priests



came in and fell into conversation with them. But something in the behaviour of one of these good men roused his suspicions. So they left the house, took a gondola, and told the man to row hard to S. Maria Zobenigo. On the way he bade him put them on shore, paid him well, and ordered him to wait for them. They landed near the palace of the Spanish embassy; and here Bibboni meant to seek sanctuary. For it must be remembered that the houses of ambassadors, no less than of princes of the Church, were inviolable. They offered the most convenient harbouring-places to rascals. Charles V., moreover, was deeply interested in the vengeance taken on Alessandro de' Medici's murderer, for his own natural daughter was Alessandro's widow and Duchess of Florence. In the palace they were met with much courtesy by about forty Spaniards, who showed considerable curiosity, and told them that Lorenzo and Alessandro Soderini had been murdered that morning by two men whose description answered to their appearance. Bibboni put their questions by and asked to see the ambassador. He was not at home. In that case, said Bibboni, take us to the secretary. Attended by some thirty Spaniards, "with great joy and gladness," they were shown into the secretary's chamber. He sent the rest of the folk away, "and locked the door well, and then embraced and kissed us before we had said a word, and afterwards bade us talk freely without any fear." When Bibboni had told the whole story, he was again embraced and kissed by the secretary, who thereupon left them and went to the private apartment of the ambassador. Shortly after he returned and led them by a winding staircase into the presence of his master. The ambassador greeted them with great honour, told them he would strain all the power of the empire to hand them in safety over to Duke Cosimo, and that he had already sent a courier to the Emperor with the good news.

So they remained in hiding in the Spanish embassy; and

in ten days' time commands were received from Charles himself that everything should be done to convey them safely to Florence. The difficulty was how to smuggle them out of Venice, where the police of the Republic were on watch, and Florentine outlaws were mounting guard on sea and shore to catch them. The ambassador began by spreading reports on the Rialto every morning of their having been seen at Padua, at Verona, in Friuli. He then hired a palace at Malghera, near Mestre, and went out daily with fifty Spaniards, and took carriage or amused himself with horse exercise and shooting. The Florentines, who were on watch, could only discover from his people that he did this for amusement. When he thought that he had put them sufficiently off their guard, the ambassador one day took Bibboni and Bebo out by Canaregio and Mestre to Malghera, concealed in his own gondola, with the whole train of Spaniards in attendance. And though, on landing, the Florentines challenged them, they durst not interfere with an ambassador or come to battle with his men. So Bebo and Bibboni were hustled into a coach, and afterwards provided with two comrades and four horses. They rode for ninety miles without stopping to sleep, and on the day following this long journey reached Trento, having probably threaded the mountain valleys above Bassano, for Bibboni speaks of a certain village where the people talked half German. The Imperial Ambassador at Trento forwarded them next day to Mantua; from Mantua they came to Piacenza; thence, passing through the valley of the Taro, crossing the Apennines at Cisa, descending on Pontremoli, and reaching Pisa at night, the fourteenth day after their escape from Venice.

When they arrived at Pisa, Duke Cosimo was supping. So they went to an inn, and next morning presented themselves to his Grace. Cosimo received them kindly, assured them of his gratitude, confirmed them in the enjoyment of their

rewards and privileges, and swore that they might rest secure of his protection in all parts of his dominion. We may imagine how the men caroused together after this reception. As Bibboni adds, "We were now able for the whole time of life left us to live splendidly, without a thought or care." The last words of his narrative are these: "Bebo from Pisa, at what date I know not, went home to Volterra, his native town, and there finished his days; while I abode in Florence, where I have had no further wish to hear of wars, but to live my life in holy peace."

So ends the story of the two *bravi*. We have reason to believe, from some contemporary documents which Cantù has brought to light, that Bibboni exaggerated his own part in the affair. Luca Martelli, writing to Varchi, says that it was Bebo who clove Lorenzo's skull with a cutlass. He adds this curious detail, that the weapons of both men were poisoned, and that the wound inflicted by Bibboni on Soderini's hand was a slight one. Yet, the poignard being poisoned, Soderini died of it. In other respects Martelli's brief account agrees with that given by Bibboni, who probably did no more, his comrade being dead, than claim for himself, at some expense of truth, the lion's share of their heroic action.

#### VII.—LORENZINO BRUTUS.

It remains to ask ourselves, What opinion can be justly formed of Lorenzino's character and motives? When he murdered his cousin, was he really actuated by the patriotic desire to rid his country of a monster? Did he imitate the Roman Brutus in the noble spirit of his predecessors, Olgiati and Boscoli, martyrs to the creed of tyrannicide? Or must this crowning action of a fretful life be explained, like his previous mutilation of the statues on the Arch of Constantine, by a wild thirst for notoriety? Did he hope that the exiles

would return to Florence, and that he would enjoy an honourable life, an immortality of glorious renown? Did envy for his cousin's greatness and resentment of his undisguised contempt—the passions of one who had been used for vile ends—conscious of self-degradation and the loss of honour, yet mindful of his intellectual superiority—did these emotions take fire in him and mingle with a scholar's reminiscences of antique heroism, prompting him to plan a deed which should at least assume the show of patriotic zeal, and prove indubitable courage in its perpetrator? Did he, again, perhaps imagine, being next in blood to Alessandro and direct heir to the ducal crown by the Imperial Settlement of 1530, that the city would elect her liberator for her ruler?

Alfieri and Niccolini, having taken, as it were, a brief in favour of tyrannicide, praised Lorenzino as a hero. De Musset, who wrote a considerable drama on his story, painted him as a *roué* corrupted by society, enfeebled by circumstance, soured by commerce with an uncongenial world, who hides at the bottom of his mixed nature enough of real nobility to make him the leader of a forlorn hope for the liberties of Florence. This is the most favourable construction we can put upon Lorenzo's conduct. Yet some facts of the case warn us to suspend our judgment. He seems to have formed no plan for the liberation of his fellow-citizens. He gave no pledge of self-devotion by avowing his deed and abiding by its issues. He showed none of the qualities of a leader, whether in the cause of freedom or of his own dynastic interests, after the murder. He escaped as soon as he was able, as secretly as he could manage, leaving the city in confusion, and exposing himself to the obvious charge of abominable treason. So far as the Florentines knew, his assassination of their Duke was but a piece of private spite, executed with infernal craft. It is true that when he seized the pen in exile, he did his best to claim the guerdon of a patriot, and



to throw the blame of failure on the Florentines. In his Apology, and in a letter written to Francesco de' Medici, he taunts them with lacking the spirit to extinguish tyranny when he had slain the tyrant. He summons plausible excuses to his aid—the impossibility of taking persons of importance into his confidence, the loss of blood he suffered from his wound, the uselessness of rousing citizens whom events proved over-indolent for action. He declares that he has nothing to regret. Having proved by deeds his will to serve his country, he has saved his life in order to spend it for her when occasion offered. But these arguments, invented after the catastrophe, these words, so bravely penned when action ought to have confirmed his resolution, do not meet the case. It was no deed of a true hero to assassinate a despot, knowing or half-knowing that the despot's subjects would immediately elect another. Their languor could not, except rhetorically, be advanced in defence of his own flight.

The historian is driven to seek both the explanation and palliation of Lorenzo's failure in the temper of his times. There was enough daring left in Florence to carry through a plan of brilliant treason, modelled on an antique Roman tragedy. But there was not moral force in the protagonist to render that act salutary, not public energy sufficient in his fellow-citizens to accomplish his drama of deliverance. Lorenzo was corrupt. Florence was flaccid. Evil manners had emasculated the hero. In the state the last spark of independence had expired with Ferrucci.

Still I have not without forethought dubbed this man a Cinque Cento Brutus. Like much of the art and literature of his century, his action may be regarded as a *bizarre* imitation of the antique manner. Without the force and purpose of a Roman, Lorenzo set himself to copy Plutarch's men—just as sculptors carved Neptunes and Apollos without the dignity and serenity of the classic style. The antique faith

was wanting to both murderer and craftsman in those days. Even as Renaissance work in art is too often aimless, decorative, vacant of intention, so Lorenzino's Brutus tragedy seems but the snapping of a pistol in void air. He had the audacity but not the ethical consistency of his crime. He played the part of Brutus like a Roscius, perfect in its histrionic details. And it doubtless gave to this skilful actor a supreme satisfaction—salving over many wounds of vanity, quenching the poignant thirst for things impossible and draughts of fame—that he could play it on no mimic stage, but on the theatre of Europe. The weakness of his conduct was the central weakness of his age and country. Italy herself lacked moral purpose, sense of righteous necessity, that consecration of self to a noble cause, which could alone have justified Lorenzo's perfidy. Confused memories of Judith, Jael, Brutus, and other classical tyrannicides, exalted his imagination. Longing for violent emotions, jaded with pleasure which had palled, discontented with his wasted life, jealous of his brutal cousin, appetitive to the last of glory, he conceived his scheme. Having conceived, he executed it with that which never failed in Cinque Cento Italy—the artistic spirit of perfection. When it was over, he shrugged his shoulders, wrote his magnificent Apology with a style of adamant upon a plate of steel, and left it for the outlaws of Filippo Strozzi's faction to deal with the crisis he had brought about. For some years he dragged out an ignoble life in obscurity, and died at last, as Varchi puts it, more by his own carelessness than by the watchful animosity of others. Over the wild, turbid, clever, incomprehensible, inconstant hero-artist's grave we write our *Requiescat*. Clio, as she takes the pen in hand to record this prayer, smiles disdainfully and turns to graver business.

## CHERUBINO AT THE SCALA THEATRE.

### I.

It was a gala night. The opera-house of Milan was one blaze of light and colour. Royalty in field-marshal's uniform and diamonds, attended by decorated generals and radiant ladies of the court, occupied the great box opposite the stage. The tiers from pit to gallery were filled with brilliantly dressed women. From the third row, where we were fortunately placed, the curves of that most beautiful of theatres presented to my gaze a series of retreating and approaching lines, composed of noble faces, waving feathers, sparkling jewels, sculptured shoulders, uniforms, robes of costly stuffs and every conceivable bright colour. Light poured from the huge lustre in the centre of the roof, ran along the crimson velvet cushions of the boxes, and flashed upon the gilded frame of the proscenium—satyrs and acanthus scrolls carved in the manner of a century ago. Pit and orchestra scarcely contained the crowd of men who stood in lively conversation, their backs turned to the stage, their lorgnettes raised from time to time to sweep the boxes. This surging sea of faces and sober costumes enhanced by contrast the glitter, variety, and luminous tranquillity of the theatre above it.

No one took much thought of the coming spectacle, till the conductor's rap was heard upon his desk, and the orchestra broke into the overture to Mozart's *Nozze*. Before they were half through, it was clear that we should not enjoy that evening the delight of perfect music added to the

enchantment of so brilliant a scene. The execution of the overture was not exactly bad. But it lacked absolute precision, the complete subordination of all details to the whole. In rendering German music Italians often fail through want of discipline, or through imperfect sympathy with a style they will not take the pains to master. Nor, when the curtain lifted and the play began, was the vocalisation found in all parts satisfactory. The Contessa had a meagre *mezza voce*. Susanna, though she did not sing false, hovered on the verge of discords, owing to the weakness of an organ which had to be strained in order to make any effect on that enormous stage. On the other hand, the part of Almaviva was played with dramatic fire, and Figaro showed a truly Southern sense of comic fun. The scenes were splendidly mounted, and something of a princely grandeur—the largeness of a noble train of life—was added to the drama by the vast proportions of the theatre. It was a performance which, in spite of drawbacks, yielded pleasure.

And yet it might have left me frigid but for the artist who played Cherubino. This was no other than Pauline Lucca, in the prime of youth and petulance. From her first appearance to the last note she sang, she occupied the stage. The opera seemed to have been written for her. The mediocrity of the troupe threw her commanding merits—the richness of her voice, the purity of her intonation, her vivid conception of character, her indescribable brusquerie of movement and emotion—into that relief which a sapphire gains from a setting of pearls. I can see her now, after the lapse of nearly twenty years, as she stood there singing in blue doublet and white mantle, with the slouched Spanish hat and plume of ostrich feathers, a tiny rapier at her side, and blue rosettes upon her white silk shoes!

The *Nozze di Figaro* was followed by a Ballo. This had for its theme the favourite legend of a female devil sent from the infernal regions to ruin a young man. Instead of per-



forming the part assigned her, Satanello falls in love with the hero, sacrifices herself, and is claimed at last by the powers of goodness. *Quia multum amavit*, her lost soul is saved. If the opera left much to be desired, the Ballo was perfection. That vast stage of the Scala Theatre had almost overwhelmed the actors of the play. Now, thrown open to its inmost depths, crowded with glittering moving figures, it became a fairyland of fantastic loveliness. Italians possess the art of interpreting a serious dramatic action by pantomime. A Ballo with them is no mere affair of dancing—fine dresses, evolutions performed by brigades of pink-legged women with a fixed smile on their faces. It takes the rank of high expressive art. And the motive of this Ballo was consistently worked out in an intelligible sequence of well-ordered scenes. To moralise upon its meaning would be out of place. It had a conflict of passions, a rhythmical progression of emotions, a tragic climax in the triumph of good over evil.

## II.

At the end of the performance there were five persons in our box—the beautiful Miranda, and her husband, a celebrated English man of letters; a German professor of biology; a young Milanese gentleman, whom we called Edoardo; and myself. Edoardo and the professor had joined us just before the ballet. I had occupied a seat behind Miranda and my friend the critic from the commencement. We had indeed dined together first at their hotel, the Rebecchino; and they now proposed that we should all adjourn together there on foot for supper. From the Scala Theatre to the Rebecchino is a walk of some three minutes.

When we were seated at the supper-table and had talked some while upon indifferent topics, the enthusiasm roused in me by Pauline Lucca burst out. I broke a moment's

silence by exclaiming, "What a wonder-world music creates ! I have lived this evening in a sphere of intellectual enjoyment raised to rapture. I never lived so fast before !" "Do you really think so ?" said Miranda. She had just finished a beccafico, and seemed disposed for conversation. "Do you really think so ? For my part, music is in a wholly different region from experience, thought, or feeling. What does it communicate to you ?" And she hummed to herself the *motif* of Cherubino's "*Non so più cosa son cosa faccio.*"—"What does it teach me ?" I broke in upon the melody. "Why, to-night, when I heard the music, and saw her there, and felt the movement of the play, it seemed to me that a new existence was revealed. For the first time I understood what love might be in one most richly gifted for emotion." Miranda bent her eyes on the table-cloth and played with her wine-glass. "I don't follow you at all. I enjoyed myself to-night. The opera, indeed, might have been better rendered. The ballet, I admit, was splendid. But when I remember the music—even the best of it—even Pauline Lucca's part"—here she looked up, and shot me a quick glance across the table—"I have mere music in my ears. Nothing more. Mere music !" The professor of biology, who was gifted with a sense of music and had studied it scientifically, had now crunched his last leaf of salad. Wiping his lips with his napkin, he joined our *tête-à-tête*. "Gracious madam, I agree with you. He who seeks from music more than music gives, is on the quest—how shall I put it ?—of the Holy Grail." "And what," I struck in, "is this minimum or maximum that music gives ?" "Dear young friend," replied the professor, "music gives melodies, harmonies, the many beautiful forms to which sound shall be fashioned. Just as in the case of shells and fossils, lovely in themselves, interesting for their history and classification, so is it with music. You must not seek an intellectual meaning. No ; there is no *Inhalt* in music." And he hummed con-

tentedly the air of "*Voi che sapete*." While he was humming, Miranda whispered to me across the table, "separate the Lucca from the music." "But," I answered rather hotly, for I was nettled by Miranda's argument *ad hominem*, "But it is not possible in an opera to divide the music from the words, the scenery, the play, the actor. Mozart, when he wrote the score to Da Ponte's libretto, was excited to production by the situations. He did not conceive his melodies out of connection with a certain cast of characters, a given ethical environment." "I do not know, my dear young friend," responded the professor, "whether you have read Mozart's Life and letters. It is clearly shown in them how he composed airs at times and seasons when he had no words to deal with. These he afterwards used as occasion served. Whence I conclude that music was for him a free and lovely play of tone. The words of our excellent Da Ponte were a scaffolding to introduce his musical creations to the public. But without that carpenter's work, the melodies of Cherubino are *Selbst-ständig*, sufficient in themselves to vindicate their place in art. Do I interpret your meaning, gracious lady?" This he said bending to Miranda. "Yes," she replied. But she still played with her wine-glass, and did not look as though she were quite satisfied. I meanwhile continued: "Of course I have read Mozart's Life, and know how he went to work. But Mozart was a man of feeling, of experience, of ardent passions. How can you prove to me that the melodies he gave to Cherubino had not been evolved from situations similar to those in which Cherubino finds himself? How can you prove he did not feel a natural appropriateness in the *motifs* he selected from his memory for Cherubino? How can you be certain that the part itself did not stimulate his musical faculty to fresh and still more appropriate creativeness? And if we must fall back on documents, do you remember what he said himself about the love-music in

*Die Entführung?* I think he tells us that he meant it to express his own feeling for the woman who had just become his wife." Miranda looked up as though she were almost half-persuaded. Yet she hummed again "*Non so più*," then said to herself, "Yes, it is wiser to believe with the professor that these are sequences of sounds, and nothing more." Then she sighed. In the pause which followed, her husband, the famous critic, filled his glass, stretched his legs out, and began: "You have embarked, I see, upon the ocean of æsthetics. For my part, to-night I was thinking how much better fitted for the stage Beaumarchais' play was than this musical mongrel—this operatic adaptation. The wit, observe, is lost. And Cherubino—that sparkling little *enfant terrible*—becomes a sentimental fellow—a something I don't know what—between a girl and a boy—a medley of romance and impudence—anyhow a being quite unlike the sharply outlined playwright's page. I confess I am not a musician; the drama is my business, and I judge things by their fitness for the stage. My wife agrees with me to differ. She likes music, I like plays. To-night she was better pleased than I was; for she got good music tolerably well rendered while I got nothing but a mangled comedy."

We bore the critic's monologue with patience. But once again the spirit, seeking after something which neither Miranda, nor her husband, nor the professor could be got to recognise, moved within me. I cried out at a venture, "People who go to an opera must forget music pure and simple, must forget the drama pure and simple. You must welcome a third species of art, in which the play, the music, the singers with their voices, the orchestra with its instruments—Pauline Lucca, if you like, with her fascination" (and here I shot a side-glance at Miranda), "are so blent as to create a world beyond the scope of poetry or music or acting taken by themselves. I give Mozart credit for having had insight



into this new world, for having brought it near to us. And I hold that every fresh representation of his work is a fresh revelation of its possibilities."

To this the critic answered, "You now seem to me to be confounding the limits of the several arts." "What!" I continued, "is the drama but emotion presented in its most external forms as action? And what is music but emotion, in its most genuine essence, expressed by sound? Where then can a more complete artistic harmony be found than in the opera?"

"The opera," replied our host, "is a hybrid. You will probably learn to dislike artistic hybrids, if you have the taste and sense I give you credit for. My own opinion has been already expressed. In the *Nozze*, Beaumarchais' *Mariage de Figaro* is simply spoiled. My friend the professor declares Mozart's music to be sufficient by itself, and the libretto to be a sort of machinery for its display. Miranda, I think, agrees with him. You plead eloquently for the hybrid. You have a right to your own view. These things are matters, in the final resort, of individual taste rather than of demonstrable principles. But I repeat that you are very young." The critic drained his Lambrusco, and smiled at me.

"Yes, he is young," added Miranda. "He must learn to distinguish between music, his own imagination, and a pretty woman. At present he mixes them all up together. It is a sort of transcendental omelette. But I think the pretty woman has more to do with it than metaphysics!"

All this while Edoardo had bestowed devout attention on his supper. But it appeared that the drift of our discourse had not been lost by him. "Well," he said, "you finely fibred people dissect and analyse. I am content with the *spettacolo*. That pleases. What does a man want more? The *Nozze* is a comedy of life and manners. The music is adorable. To-night the women were not bad to look at—the Lucca was

divine ; the scenes—ingenious. I thought but little. I came away delighted. You could have a better play, Caro Signore !” (with a bow to our host). “That is granted. You might have better music, Cara Signora !” (with a bow to Miranda). “That too is granted. But when the play and the music come together—how shall I say?—the music helps the play, and the play helps the music ; and we—well we, I suppose, must help both !”

Edoardo’s little speech was so ingenuous, and, what is more, so true to his Italian temperament, that it made us all laugh and leave the argument just where we found it. The bottles of Lambrusco supplied us each with one more glass ; and while we were drinking them, Miranda, woman-like, taking the last word, but contradicting herself, softly hummed “*Non so più cosa son,*” and “Ah !” she said, “I shall dream of love to-night !”

We rose and said good-night. But when I had reached my bedroom in the Hôtel de la Ville, I sat down, obstinate and unconvinced, and penned this rhapsody, which I have lately found among papers of nearly twenty years ago. I give it as it stands.

### III.

Mozart has written the two melodramas of love—the one a melo-tragedy, the other a melo-comedy. But in really noble art, Comedy and Tragedy have faces of equal serenity and beauty. In the Vatican there are marble busts of the two Muses, differing chiefly in their head-dresses : that of Tragedy is an elaborately built-up structure of fillets and flowing hair, piled high above the forehead and descending in long curls upon the shoulders ; while Comedy wears a similar adornment, with the addition of a wreath of vine-leaves and grape-bunches. The expression of the sister goddesses is

no less finely discriminated. Over the mouth of Comedy plays a subtle smile, and her eyes are relaxed in a half-merriment. A shadow rests upon the slightly heavier brows of Tragedy, and her lips, though not compressed, are graver. So delicately did the Greek artist indicate the division between two branches of one dramatic art. And since all great art is classical, Mozart's two melodramas, *Don Giovanni* and the *Nozze di Figaro*, though the one is tragic and the other comic, are twin-sisters, similar in form and feature.

The central figure of the melo-tragedy is Don Juan, the hero of unlimited desire, pursuing the unattainable through tortuous interminable labyrinths, eager in appetite yet never satisfied, "for ever following and for ever foiled." He is the incarnation of lust that has become a habit of the soul—rebellious, licentious, selfish, even cruel. His nature, originally noble and brave, has assumed the qualities peculiar to lust—rebellion, license, cruelty, defiant egotism. Yet, such as he is, doomed to punishment and execration, Don Juan remains a fit subject for poetry and music, because he is complete, because he is impelled by some demonic influence, spurred on by yearnings after an unsearchable delight. In his death, the spirit of chivalry survives, metamorphosed, it is true, into the spirit of revolt, yet still tragic, such as might animate the desperate sinner of a haughty breed.

The central figure of the melo-comedy is Cherubino, the genius of love, no less insatiable, but undetermined to virtue or to vice. This is the point of Cherubino, that the ethical capacities in him are still potential. His passion still hovers on the border-land of good and bad. And this undetermined passion is beautiful because of extreme freshness; of infinite, immeasurable expansibility. Cherubino is the epitome of all that belongs to the amorous temperament in a state of still ascendant adolescence. He is about sixteen years of age—a boy yesterday, a man to-morrow—to-day both and neither—

something beyond boyhood, but not yet limited by man's responsibility and man's absorbing passions. He partakes of both ages in the primal awakening to self-consciousness. Desire, which in Don Juan has become a fiend, hovers before him like a fairy. His are the sixteen years, not of a Northern climate, but of Spain or Italy, where manhood appears in a flash, and overtakes the child with sudden sunrise of new faculties. *Nondum amabam, sed amare amabam, quaerebam quod amarem, amans amare*—"I loved not yet, but was in love with loving; I sought what I should love, being in love with loving." That sentence, penned by S. Augustine and consecrated by Shelley, describes the mood of Cherubino. He loves at every moment of his life, with every pulse of his being. His object is not a beloved being, but love itself—the satisfaction of an irresistible desire, the paradise of bliss which merely loving has become for him. What love means he hardly knows. He only knows that he must love. And women love him—half as a plaything to be trifled with, half as a young god to be wounded by. This rising of the star of love as it ascends into the heaven of youthful fancy, is revealed in the melodies Mozart has written for him. How shall we describe their potency? Who shall translate those curiously perfect words to which tone and rhythm have been indissolubly wedded? *E pur mi piace languir così. . . . E se non ho chi m' oda, parlo d' amor con me.*

But if this be so, it may be asked, Who shall be found worthy to act Cherubino on the stage? You cannot have seen and heard Pauline Lucca, or you would not ask this question.

Cherubino is by no means the most important person in the plot of the *Nozze*. But he strikes the keynote of the opera. His love is the standard by which we measure the sad, retrospective, stately love of the Countess, who tries to win back an alienated husband. By Cherubino we measure



the libertine love of the Count, who is a kind of Don Juan without cruelty, and the humorous love of Figaro and his sprightly bride Susanna. Each of these characters typifies one of the many species of love. But Cherubino anticipates and harmonises all. They are conscious, experienced, world-worn, disillusioned, trivial. He is all love, foreseen, foreshadowed in a dream of life to be; all love, diffused through brain and heart and nerves like electricity; all love, merging the moods of ecstasy, melancholy, triumph, regret, jealousy, joy, expectation, in a hazy sheen, as of some Venetian sunrise. What will Cherubino be after three years? A Romeo, a Lovelace, a Lothario, a Juan? a disillusioned rake, a sentimentalist, an effete fop, a romantic lover? He may become any one of these, for he contains the possibilities of all. As yet, he is the dear glad angel of the May of love, the nightingale of orient emotion. This moment in the unfolding of character Mozart has arrested and eternalised for us in Cherubino's melodies; for it is the privilege of art to render things most fugitive and evanescent fixed imperishably in immortal form.

#### IV.

This is indeed a rhapsodical production. Miranda was probably right. Had it not been for Pauline Lucca, I might not have philosophised the *Nozze* thus. Yet, in the main, I believe that my instinct was well grounded. Music, especially when wedded to words, more especially when those words are dramatic, cannot separate itself from emotion. It will not do to tell us that a melody is a certain sequence of sounds; that the composer chose it for its beauty of rhythm, form, and tune, and only used the words to get it vocalised. We are forced to go farther back, and ask ourselves, What suggested it in the first place to the composer?

why did he use it precisely in connection with this dramatic situation? How can we answer these questions except by supposing that music was for him the utterance through art of some emotion? The final fact of human nature is emotion, crystallising itself in thought and language, externalising itself in action and art. "What," said Novalis, "are thoughts but pale dead feelings?" Admitting this even in part, we cannot deny to music an emotional content of some kind. I would go farther, and assert that, while a merely mechanical musician may set inappropriate melodies to words, and render music inexpressive of character, what constitutes a musical dramatist is the conscious intention of fitting to the words of his libretto such melody as shall interpret character, and the power to do this with effect.

That the Cherubino of Mozart's *Nozze* is quite different from Beaumarchais' Cherubin does not affect this question. He is a new creation, just because Mozart could not, or would not, conceive the character of the page in Beaumarchais' sprightly superficial spirit. He used the part to utter something unutterable except by music about the soul of the still adolescent lover. The libretto-part and the melodies, taken together, constitute a new romantic ideal, consistent with experience, but realised with the intensity and universality whereby art is distinguished from life. Don Juan was a myth before Mozart touched him with the magic wand of music. Cherubino became a myth by the same Prospero's spell. Both characters have the universality, the symbolic potency, which belongs to legendary beings. That there remains a discrepancy between the boy-page and the music made for him, can be conceded without danger to my theory; for the music made for Cherubino is meant to interpret his psychical condition, and is independent of his boyishness of conduct.

This further explains why there may be so many render-

ings of Cherubino's melodies. Mozart idealised an infinite emotion. The singer is forced to define; the actor also is forced to define. Each introduces his own limit on the feeling. When the actor and the singer meet together in one personality, this definition of emotion becomes of necessity doubly specific. The condition of all music is that it depends in a great measure on the temperament of the interpreter for its momentary shade of expression, and this dependence is of course exaggerated when the music is dramatic. Furthermore, the subjectivity of the audience enters into the problem as still another element of definition. It may, therefore, be fairly said that, in estimating any impression produced by Cherubino's music, the original character of the page, transplanted from French comedy to Italian opera, Mozart's conception of that character, Mozart's specific quality of emotion and specific style of musical utterance, together with the contralto's interpretation of the character and rendering of the music, according to her intellectual capacity, artistic skill, and timbre of voice, have collaborated with the individuality of the hearer. Some of the constituents of the ever-varying product—a product which is new each time the part is played—are fixed. Da Ponte's Cherubino and Mozart's melodies remain unalterable. All the rest is undecided: the singer and the listener change on each occasion.

To assert that the musician Mozart meant nothing by his music, to assert that he only cared about it *quâ* music, is the same as to say that the painter Tintoretto, when he put the Crucifixion upon canvas, the sculptor Michelangelo, when he carved Christ upon the lap of Mary, meant nothing, and only cared about the beauty of their forms and colours. Those who take up this position prove, not that the artist has no meaning to convey, but that for them the artist's nature is unintelligible, and his meaning is conveyed in an

unknown tongue. It seems superfluous to guard against misinterpretation by saying that to expect clear definition from music—the definition which belongs to poetry—would be absurd. The sphere of music is in sensuous perception; the sphere of poetry is in intelligence. Music, dealing with pure sound, must always be vaguer in significance than poetry, dealing with words. Nevertheless its effect upon the sentient subject may be more intense and penetrating for this very reason. We cannot fail to understand what words are intended to convey; we may very easily interpret in a hundred different ways the message of sound. But this is not because words are wider in their reach and more alive; rather because they are more limited, more stereotyped, more dead. They symbolise something precise and unmistakable; but this precision is itself attenuation of the something symbolised. The exact value of the counter is better understood when it is a word than when it is a chord, because all that a word conveys has already become a thought, while all that musical sounds convey remains within the region of emotion which has not been intellectualised. Poetry touches emotion through the thinking faculty. If music reaches the thinking faculty at all, it is through fibres of emotion. But emotion, when it has become thought, has already lost a portion of its force, and has taken to itself a something alien to its nature. Therefore the message of music can never rightly be translated into words. It is the very largeness and vividness of the sphere of simple feeling which makes its symbolical counterpart in sound so seeming vague. But in spite of this incontestable defect of seeming vagueness, emotion expressed by music is nearer to our sentient self, if we have ears to take it in, than the same emotion limited by language. It is intenser, it is more immediate, as compensation for being less intelligible, less unmistakable in meaning. It is an infinite, an indistinct, where each consciousness defines and sets a limitary form.



## V.

A train of thought which begins with the concrete not unfrequently finds itself finishing, almost against its will, in abstractions. This is the point to which the performance of Cherubino's part by Pauline Lucca at the Scala twenty years ago has led me—that I have to settle with myself what I mean by art in general, and what I take to be the proper function of music as one of the fine arts.

"Art," said Goethe, "is but form-giving." We might vary this definition, and say, "Art is a method of expression or presentation." Then comes the question: If art gives form, if it is a method of expression or presentation, to what does it give form, what does it express or present? The answer certainly must be: Art gives form to human consciousness; expresses or presents the feeling or the thought of man. Whatever else art may do by the way, in the communication of innocent pleasures, in the adornment of life and the softening of manners, in the creation of beautiful shapes and sounds, this, at all events, is its prime function.

While investing thought, the spiritual subject-matter of all art, with form, or finding for it proper modes of presentation, each of the arts employs a special medium, obeying the laws of beauty proper to that medium. The vehicles of the arts, roughly speaking, are material substances (like stone, wood, metal), pigments, sounds, and words. The masterly handling of these vehicles and the realisation of their characteristic types of beauty have come to be regarded as the craftsman's paramount concern. And in a certain sense this is a right conclusion; for dexterity in the manipulation of the chosen vehicle and power to create a beautiful object, distinguish the successful artist from the man who may have had like thoughts and feelings.

This dexterity, this power, are the properties of the artist *quâ* artist. Yet we must not forget that the form created by the artist for the expression of a thought or feeling is not the final end of art itself. That form, after all, is but the mode of presentation through which the spiritual content manifests itself. Beauty, in like manner, is not the final end of art, but is the indispensable condition under which the artistic manifestation of the spiritual content must be made. It is the business of art to create an ideal world, in which perception, emotion, understanding, action, all elements of human life sublimed by thought, shall reappear in concrete forms as beauty. This being so, the logical criticism of art demands that we should not only estimate the technical skill of artists and their faculty for presenting beauty to the æsthetic sense, but that we should also ask ourselves what portion of the human spirit he has chosen to invest with form, and how he has conceived his subject. It is not necessary that the ideas embodied in a work of art should be the artist's own. They may be common to the race and age: as, for instance, the conception of sovereign deity expressed in the Olympian Zeus of Pheidias, or the conception of divine maternity expressed in Raphael's Madonna di San Sisto. Still the personality of the artist, his own intellectual and moral nature, his peculiar way of thinking and feeling, his individual attitude towards the material given to him in ideas of human consciousness, will modify his choice of subject and of form, and will determine his specific type of beauty. To take an example: supposing that an idea, common to his race and age, is given to the artist for treatment; this will be the final end of the work of art which he produces. But his personal qualities and technical performance determine the degree of success or failure to which he attains in presenting that idea and in expressing it with beauty. Signorelli fails where Perugino excels, in giving adequate and lovely form to the religious

sentiment. Michelangelo is sure of the sublime, and Raphael of the beautiful.

Art is thus the presentation of the human spirit by the artist to his fellow-men. The subject-matter of the arts is commensurate with what man thinks and feels and does. It is as deep as religion, as wide as life. But what distinguishes art from religion or from life is, that this subject-matter must assume beautiful form, and must be presented directly or indirectly to the senses. Art is not the school or the cathedral, but the play-ground, the paradise of humanity. It does not teach, it does not preach. Nothing abstract enters into art's domain. Truth and goodness are transmuted into beauty there, just as in science beauty and goodness assume the shape of truth, and in religion truth and beauty become goodness. The rigid definitions, the unmistakable laws of science, are not to be found in art. Whatever art has touched acquires a concrete sensuous embodiment, and thus ideas presented to the mind in art have lost a portion of their pure thought-essence. It is on this account that the religious conceptions of the Greeks were so admirably fitted for the art of sculpture, and certain portions of the medieval Christian mythology lent themselves so well to painting. For the same reason the metaphysics of ecclesiastical dogma defy the artist's plastic faculty. Art, in a word, is a middle term between reason and the senses. Its secondary aim, after the prime end of presenting the human spirit in beautiful form has been accomplished, is to give tranquil and innocent enjoyment.

From what has gone before it will be seen that no human being can make or mould a beautiful form without incorporating in that form some portion of the human mind, however crude, however elementary. In other words, there is no work of art without a theme, without a motive, without a subject.

The presentation of that theme, that motive, that subject, is the final end of art. The art is good or bad according as the subject has been well or ill presented, consistently with the laws of beauty special to the art itself. Thus we obtain two standards for æsthetic criticism. We judge a statue, for example, both by the sculptor's intellectual grasp upon his subject, and also by his technical skill and sense of beauty. In a picture of the Last Judgment by Fra Angelico we say that the bliss of the righteous has been more successfully treated than the torments of the wicked, because the former has been better understood, although the painter's skill in each is equal. In the Perseus of Cellini we admire the sculptor's spirit, finish of execution, and originality of design, while we deplore that want of sympathy with the heroic character which makes his type of physical beauty slightly vulgar and his facial expression vacuous.

If the phrase "Art for art's sake" has any meaning, this meaning is simply that the artist, having chosen a theme, thinks exclusively in working at it of technical dexterity or the quality of beauty. There are many inducements for the artist thus to narrow his function, and for the critic to assist him by applying the canons of a soulless connoisseurship to his work; for the conception of the subject is but the starting-point in art-production, and the artist's difficulties and triumphs as a craftsman lie in the region of technicalities. He knows, moreover, that, however deep or noble his idea may be, his work of art will be worthless if it fail in skill or be devoid of beauty. What converts a thought into a statue or a picture, is the form found for it; and so the form itself seems all-important. The artist, therefore, too easily imagines that he may neglect his theme; that a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, or, as Cellini put it, "*un bel corpo ignudo*," is enough. And this is especially easy in an age which reflects much upon the



arts, and pursues them with enthusiasm, while its deeper thoughts and feelings are not of the kind which translate themselves readily into artistic form. But, after all, a fine piece of colouring, a well-balanced composition, a sonorous stanza, a learned essay in counterpoint, are not enough. They are all excellent good things, yielding delight to the artistic sense and instruction to the student. Yet when we think of the really great statues, pictures, poems, music of the world, we find that these are really great because of something more—and that more is their theme, their presentation of a noble portion of the human soul. Artists and art-students may be satisfied with perfect specimens of a craftsman's skill, independent of his theme; but the mass of men will not be satisfied; and it is as wrong to suppose that art exists for artists and art-students, as to talk of art for art's sake. Art exists for humanity. Art transmutes thought and feeling into terms of beautiful form. Art is great and lasting in proportion as it appeals to the human consciousness at large, presenting to it portions of itself in adequate and lovely form.

## VI.

It was necessary in the first place firmly to apprehend the truth that the final end of all art is the presentation of a spiritual content; it is necessary in the next place to remove confusions by considering the special circumstances of the several arts.

Each art has its own vehicle of presentation. What it can present and how it must present it, depends upon the nature of this vehicle. Thus, though architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, meet upon the common ground of spiritualised experience—though the works of art produced by the architect, sculptor, painter, musician, poet, emanate from the

spiritual nature of the race, are coloured by the spiritual nature of the men who make them, and express what is spiritual in humanity under concrete forms invented for them by the artist—yet it is certain that all of these arts do not deal exactly with the same portions of this common material in the same way or with the same results. Each has its own department. Each exhibits qualities of strength and weakness special to itself. To define these several departments, to explain the relation of these several vehicles of presentation to the common subject-matter, is the next step in criticism.

Of the fine arts, architecture alone subserves utility. We build for use. But the geometrical proportions which the architect observes, contain the element of beauty and powerfully influence the soul. Into the language of arch and aisle and colonnade, of cupola and façade and pediment, of spire and vault, the architect translates emotion, vague perhaps but deep, mute but unmistakable. When we say that a building is sublime or graceful, frivolous or stern, we mean that sublimity or grace, frivolity or sternness, is inherent in it. The emotions connected with these qualities are inspired in us when we contemplate it, and are presented to us by its form. Whether the architect deliberately aimed at the sublime or graceful—whether the dignified serenity of the Athenian genius sought to express itself in the Parthenon, and the mysticism of medieval Christianity in the gloom of Chartres Cathedral—whether it was Renaissance paganism which gave its mundane pomp and glory to S. Peter's, and the refined selfishness of royalty its specious splendour to the palace of Versailles—need not be curiously questioned. The fact that we are impelled to raise these points, that architecture more almost than any art connects itself indissolubly with the life, the character, the moral being of a nation and an epoch,

proves that we are justified in bringing it beneath our general definition of the arts. In a great measure because it subserves utility, and is therefore dependent upon the necessities of life, does architecture present to us through form the human spirit. Comparing the palace built by Giulio Romano for the Dukes of Mantua with the contemporary castle of a German prince, we cannot fail at once to comprehend the difference of spiritual conditions, as these displayed themselves in daily life, which then separated Italy from the Teutonic nations. But this is not all. Spiritual quality in the architect himself finds clear expression in his work. Coldness combined with violence marks Brunelleschi's churches ; a certain suavity and well-bred taste the work of Bramante ; while Michelangelo exhibits wayward energy in his Library of S. Lorenzo, and Amadeo self-abandonment to fancy in his Lombard chapels. I have chosen examples from one nation and one epoch in order that the point I seek to make, the demonstration of a spiritual quality in buildings, may be fairly stated.

Sculpture and painting distinguish themselves from the other fine arts by the imitation of concrete existences in nature. They copy the bodies of men and animals, the aspects of the world around us, and the handiwork of men. Yet, in so far as they are rightly arts, they do not make imitation an object in itself. The grapes of Zeuxis at which birds pecked, the painted dog at which a cat's hair bristles—if such grapes or such a dog were ever put on canvas—are but evidences of the artist's skill, not of his faculty as artist. These two plastic, or, as I prefer to call them, figurative arts, use their imitation of the external world for the expression, the presentation of internal, spiritual things. The human form is for them the outward symbol of the inner human spirit, and their power of presenting spirit is limited by the means at their disposal.

Sculpture employs stone, wood, clay, the precious metals, to model forms, detached and independent, or raised upon a flat surface in relief. Its domain is the whole range of human character and consciousness, in so far as these can be indicated by fixed facial expression, by physical type, and by attitude. If we dwell for an instant on the greatest historical epoch of sculpture, we shall understand the domain of this art in its range and limitation. At a certain point of Greek development the Hellenic Pantheon began to be translated by the sculptors into statues; and when the genius of the Greeks expired in Rome, the cycle of their psychological conceptions had been exhaustively presented through this medium. During that long period of time, the most delicate gradations of human personality, divinised, idealised, were presented to the contemplation of the consciousness which gave them being, in appropriate types. Strength and swift-ness, massive force and airy lightness, contemplative repose and active energy, voluptuous softness and refined grace, intellectual sublimity and lascivious seductiveness—the whole rhythm of qualities which can be typified by bodily form—were analysed, selected, combined in various degrees, to incarnate the religious conceptions of Zeus, Aphrodite, Herakles, Dionysus, Pallas, Fauns and Satyrs, Nymphs of woods and waves, Tritons, the genius of Death, heroes and hunters, lawgivers and poets, presiding deities of minor functions, man's lustful appetites and sensual needs. All that men think, or do, or are, or wish for, or imagine in this world, had found exact corporeal equivalents. Not physiognomy alone, but all the portions of the body upon which the habits of the animating soul are wont to stamp themselves, were studied and employed as symbolism. Uranian Aphrodite was distinguished from her Pandemic sister by chastened lust-repelling loveliness. The muscles of Herakles were more ponderous than the tense sinews of Achilles. The Hermes



of the palæstra bore a torso of majestic depth; the Hermes, who carried messages from heaven, had limbs alert for movement. The brows of Zeus inspired awe; the breasts of Dionysus breathed delight.

A race accustomed, as the Greeks were, to read this symbolism, accustomed, as the Greeks were, to note the individuality of naked form, had no difficulty in interpreting the language of sculpture. Nor is there now much difficulty in the task. Our surest guide to the subject of a basrelief or statue is study of the physical type considered as symbolical of spiritual quality. From the fragment of a torso the true critic can say whether it belongs to the athletic or the erotic species. A limb of Bacchus differs from a limb of Poseidon. The whole psychological conception of Aphrodite Pandemos enters into every muscle, every joint, no less than into her physiognomy, her hair, her attitude.

There is, however, a limit to the domain of sculpture. This art deals most successfully with personified generalities. It is also strong in the presentation of incarnate character. But when it attempts to tell a story, we often seek in vain its meaning. Battles of Amazons or Centaurs upon basreliefs, indeed, are unmistakable. The subject is indicated here by some external sign. The group of Laocoon appeals at once to a reader of Virgil, and the divine vengeance of Leto's children upon Niobe is manifest in the Uffizzi marbles. But who are the several heroes of the Æginetan pediment, and what was the subject of the Pheidian statues on the Parthenon? Do the three graceful figures of a basrelief which exists at Naples and in the Villa Albani, represent Orpheus, Hermes, and Eurydice, or Antiope and her two sons? Was the winged and sworded genius upon the Ephesus column meant for a genius of Death or a genius of Love?

This dimness of significance indicates the limitation of sculpture, and inclines some of those who feel its charm to

assert that the sculptor seeks to convey no intellectual meaning, that he is satisfied with the creation of beautiful form. There is sense in this revolt against the faith which holds that art is nothing but a mode of spiritual presentation. Truly the artist aims at producing beauty, is satisfied if he conveys delight. But it is impossible to escape from the certainty that, while he is creating forms of beauty, he means something; and that something, that theme for which he finds the form, is part of the world's spiritual heritage. Only the crudest works of plastic art, capricci and arabesques, have no intellectual content; and even these are good in so far as they convey the playfulness of fancy.

Painting employs colours upon surfaces—walls, panels, canvas. What has been said about sculpture will apply in a great measure to this art. The human form, the world around us, the works of man's hands, are represented in painting, not for their own sake merely, but with a view to bringing thought, feeling, action, home to the consciousness of the spectator from the artist's consciousness on which they have been impressed. Painting can tell a story better than sculpture, can represent more complicated feelings, can suggest thoughts of a subtler intricacy. Through colour, it can play, like music, directly on powerful but vague emotion. It is deficient in fulness and roundness of concrete reality. A statue stands before us, the soul incarnate in ideal form, fixed and frozen for eternity. The picture is a reflection cast upon a magic glass; not less permanent, but reduced to a shadow of reality. To follow these distinctions farther would be alien from the present purpose. It is enough to repeat that, within their several spheres, according to their several strengths and weaknesses, both sculpture and painting present the spirit to us only as the spirit shows itself immersed in things of sense. The light of a lamp enclosed within an alabaster vase is still

lamplight, though shorn of lustre and toned to coloured softness. Even thus the spirit, immersed in things of sense presented to us by the figurative arts, is still spirit, though diminished in its intellectual clearness and invested with hues not its own. To fashion that alabaster form of art with utmost skill, to make it beautiful, to render it transparent, is the artist's function. But he will have failed of the highest if the light within burns dim, or if he gives the world a lamp in which no spiritual flame is lighted.

Music transports us to a different region. It imitates nothing. It uses pure sound, and sound of the most wholly artificial kind—so artificial that the musical sounds of one race are unmusical, and therefore unintelligible, to another. Like architecture, music relies upon mathematical proportions. Unlike architecture, music serves no utility. It is the purest art of pleasure—the truest paradise and playground of the spirit. It has less power than painting, even less power than sculpture, to tell a story or to communicate an idea. For we must remember that when music is married to words, the words, and not the music, reach our thinking faculty. And yet, in spite of all, music presents man's spirit to itself through form. The domain of the spirit over which music reigns, is emotion—not defined emotion, not feeling even so defined as jealousy or anger—but those broad bases of man's being out of which emotions spring, defining themselves through action into this or that set type of feeling. Architecture, we have noticed, is so connected with specific modes of human existence, that from its main examples we can reconstruct the life of men who used it. Sculpture and painting, by limiting their presentation to the imitation of external things, have all the help which experience and association render. The mere artificiality of music's vehicle separates it from life and makes its message untranslatable. Yet, as I have

already pointed out, this very disability under which it labours is the secret of its extraordinary potency. Nothing intervenes between the musical work of art and the fibres of the sentient being it immediately thrills. We do not seek to say what music means. We feel the music. And if a man should pretend that the music has not passed beyond his ears, has communicated nothing but a musical delight, he simply tells us that he has not felt music. The ancients on this point were wiser than some moderns when, without pretending to assign an intellectual significance to music, they held it for an axiom that one type of music bred one type of character, another type another. A change in the music of a state, wrote Plato, will be followed by changes in its constitution. It is of the utmost importance, said Aristotle, to provide in education for the use of the ennobling and the fortifying moods. These philosophers knew that music creates a spiritual world, in which the spirit cannot live and move without contracting habits of emotion. In this vagueness of significance but intensity of feeling lies the magic of music. A melody occurs to the composer, which he certainly connects with no act of the reason, which he is probably unconscious of connecting with any movement of his feeling, but which nevertheless is the form in sound of an emotional mood. When he reflects upon the melody secreted thus impromptu, he is aware, as we learn from his own lips, that this work has correspondence with emotion. Beethoven calls one symphony Heroic, another Pastoral; of the opening of another he says, "Fate knocks at the door." Mozart sets comic words to the mass-music of a friend, in order to mark his sense of its inaptitude for religious sentiment. All composers use phrases like *Maestoso*, *Pomposo*, *Allegro*, *Lagrimoso*, *Con Fuoco*, to express the general complexion of the mood their music ought to represent.



Before passing to poetry, it may be well to turn aside and consider two subordinate arts, which deserve a place in any system of æsthetics. These are dancing and acting. Dancing uses the living human form, and presents feeling or action, the passions and the deeds of men, in artificially educated movements of the body. The element of beauty it possesses, independently of the beauty of the dancer, is rhythm. Acting or the art of mimicry presents the same subject-matter, no longer under the conditions of fixed rhythm, but as an ideal reproduction of reality. The actor is what he represents, and the element of beauty in his art is perfection of realisation. It is his duty as an artist to show us Orestes or Othello, not perhaps exactly as Othello and Orestes were, but as the essence of their tragedies, ideally incorporate in action, ought to be. The actor can do this in dumb show. Some of the greatest actors of the ancient world were mimes. But he usually interprets a poet's thought, and attempts to present an artistic conception in a secondary form of art, which has for its advantage his own personality in play.

The last of the fine arts is literature; or, in the narrower sphere of which it will be well to speak here only, is poetry. Poetry employs words in fixed rhythms, which we call metres. Only a small portion of its effect is derived from the beauty of its sound. It appeals to the sense of hearing far less immediately than music does. It makes no appeal to the eyesight, and takes no help from the beauty of colour. It produces no tangible object. But language being the storehouse of all human experience, language being the medium whereby spirit communicates with spirit in affairs of life, the vehicle which transmits to us the thoughts and feelings of the past, and on which we rely for continuing our present to the future, it follows that, of all the arts, poetry soars highest, flies widest, and is most at home in the region of the spirit. What

poetry lacks of sensuous fulness, it more than balances by intellectual intensity. Its significance is unmistakable, because it employs the very material men use in their exchange of thoughts and correspondence of emotions. To the bounds of its empire there is no end. It embraces in its own more abstract being all the arts. By words it does the work in turn of architecture, sculpture, painting, music. It is the metaphysic of the fine arts. Philosophy finds place in poetry; and life itself, refined to its last utterance, hangs trembling on this thread which joins our earth to heaven, this bridge between experience and the realms where unattainable and imperceptible will have no meaning.

If we are right in defining art as the manifestation of the human spirit to man by man in beautiful form, poetry, more incontestably than any other art, fulfils this definition and enables us to gauge its accuracy. For words are the spirit, manifested to itself in symbols with no sensual alloy. Poetry is therefore the presentation, through words, of life and all that life implies. Perception, emotion, thought, action, find in descriptive, lyrical, reflective, dramatic, and epical poetry their immediate apocalypse. In poetry we are no longer puzzled with problems as to whether art has or has not of necessity a spiritual content. There cannot be any poetry whatsoever without a spiritual meaning of some sort: good or bad, moral, immoral, or non-moral, obscure or lucid, noble or ignoble, slight or weighty—such distinctions do not signify. In poetry we are not met by questions whether the poet intended to convey a meaning when he made it. Quite meaningless poetry (as some critics would fain find melody quite meaningless, or a statue meaningless, or a Venetian picture meaningless) is a contradiction in terms. In poetry, life, or a portion of life, lives again, resuscitated and presented to our mental faculty through art. The best poetry is that which reproduces the most of life, or its

intensest moments. Therefore the extensive species of the drama and the epic, the intensive species of the lyric, have been ever held in highest esteem. Only a half-crazy critic flaunts the paradox that poetry is excellent in so far as it assimilates the vagueness of music, or estimates a poet by his power of translating sense upon the border-land of nonsense into melodious words. Where poetry falls short in the comparison with other arts, is in the quality of form-giving, in the quality of sensuous concreteness. Poetry can only present forms to the mental eye and to the intellectual sense, stimulate the physical senses by indirect suggestion. Therefore dramatic poetry, the most complicated kind of poetry, relies upon the actor; and lyrical poetry, the intensest kind of poetry, seeks the aid of music. But these comparative deficiencies are over-balanced, for all the highest purposes of art, by the width and depth, the intelligibility and power, the flexibility and multitudinous associations, of language. The other arts are limited in what they utter. There is nothing which has entered into the life of man which poetry cannot express. Poetry says everything in man's own language to the mind. The other arts appeal imperatively, each in its own region, to man's senses; and the mind receives art's message by the help of symbols from the world of sense. Poetry lacks this immediate appeal to sense. But the elixir which it offers to the mind, its quintessence extracted from all things of sense, reacts through intellectual perception upon all the faculties that make men what they are.

## VII.

I used a metaphor in one of the foregoing paragraphs to indicate the presence of the vital spirit, the essential element of thought or feeling, in the work of art. I said it radiated through the form, as lamplight through an alabaster vase.

Now the skill of the artist is displayed in modelling that vase, in giving it shape, rich and rare, and fashioning its curves with subtlest workmanship. In so far as he is a craftsman, the artist's pains must be bestowed upon this precious vessel of the animating theme. In so far as he has power over beauty, he must exert it in this plastic act. It is here that he displays dexterity; here that he creates; here that he separates himself from other men who think and feel. The poet, more perhaps than any other artist, needs to keep this steadily in view; for words being our daily vehicle of utterance, it may well chance that the alabaster vase of language should be hastily or trivially modelled. This is the true reason why "neither gods nor men nor the columns either suffer mediocrity in singers." Upon the poet it is specially incumbent to see that he has something rare to say and some rich mode of saying it. The figurative arts need hardly be so cautioned. They run their risk in quite a different direction. For sculptor and for painter, the danger is lest he should think that alabaster vase his final task. He may too easily be satisfied with moulding a beautiful but empty form.

The last word on the topic of the arts is given in one sentence. Let us remember that every work of art enshrines a spiritual subject, and that the artist's power is shown in finding for that subject a form of ideal loveliness. Many kindred points remain to be discussed; as what we mean by beauty, which is a condition indispensable to noble art; and what are the relations of the arts to ethics. These questions cannot now be raised. It is enough in one essay to have tried to vindicate the spirituality of art in general.



## BACCHUS IN GRAUBÜNDEN.

### I.

SOME years' residence in the Canton of the Grisons made me familiar with all sorts of Valtelline wine; with masculine but rough *Inferno*, generous *Forzato*, delicate *Sassella*, harsher *Montagner*, the raspberry flavour of *Grumello*, the sharp invigorating twang of *Villa*. The colour, ranging from garnet to almandine or ruby, told me the age and quality of wine; and I could judge from the crust it forms upon the bottle, whether it had been left long enough in wood to ripen. I had furthermore arrived at the conclusion that the best Valtelline can only be tasted in cellars of the Engadine or Davos, where this vintage matures slowly in the mountain air, and takes a flavour unknown at lower levels. In a word, it had amused my leisure to make or think myself a connoisseur. My literary taste was tickled by the praise bestowed in the Augustan age on Rhætic grapes by Virgil :

Et quo te carmine dicam,  
Rhætica ? nec cellis ideo contende Falernis.

I piqued myself on thinking that could the poet but have drunk one bottle at Samaden—where Stilicho, by the way, in his famous recruiting expedition may perhaps have drunk it—he would have been less chary in his panegyric. For the point of inferiority on which he seems to insist, namely, that Valtelline wine does not keep well in cellar, is only proper to this vintage in Italian climate.

Such meditations led my fancy on the path of history. Is there truth, then, in the dim tradition that this mountain land was colonised by Etruscans? Is *Ras* the root of *Rhætia*? The Etruscans were accomplished wine-growers, we know. It was their Montepulciano which drew the Gauls to Rome, if Livy can be trusted. Perhaps they first planted the vine in Valtelline. Perhaps its superior culture in that district may be due to ancient use surviving in a secluded Alpine valley. One thing is certain, that the peasants of Sondrio and Tirano understand viticulture better than the Italians of Lombardy.

Then my thoughts ran on to the period of modern history, when the Grisons seized the Valtelline in lieu of war-pay from the Dukes of Milan. For some three centuries they held it as a subject province. From the Rath-Haus at Davos or Chur they sent their nobles—Von Salis and Buol, Planta and Sprecher von Bernegg—across the hills as governors or podestàs to Poschiavo, Sondrio, Tirano, and Morbegno. In those old days the Valtelline wines came duly every winter over snow-deep passes to fill the cellars of the Signori Grigioni. That quaint traveller Tom Coryat, in his so-called *Crudities*, notes the custom early in the seventeenth century. And as that custom then obtained, it still subsists with little alteration. The wine-carriers—Wein-führer, as they are called—first scaled the Bernina pass, halting then as now, perhaps, at Poschiavo and Pontresina. Afterwards, in order to reach Davos, the pass of the Scaletta rose before them—a wilderness of untracked snow-drifts. The country-folk still point to narrow, light hand-sledges, on which the casks were charged before the last pitch of the pass. Some wine came, no doubt, on pack-saddles. A meadow in front of the Dischma-Thal, where the pass ends, still bears the name of the Ross-Weid, or horse-pasture. It was here that the beasts of burden used for this wine-service, rested after their long labours.

In favourable weather the whole journey from Tirano would have occupied at least four days, with scanty halts at night.

The Valtelline slipped from the hands of the Grisons early in this century. It is rumoured that one of the Von Salis family negotiated matters with Napoleon more for his private benefit than for the interests of the state. However this may have been, when the Graubünden became a Swiss Canton, after four centuries of sovereign independence, the whole Valtelline passed to Austria, and so eventually to Italy. According to modern and just notions of nationality, this was right. In their period of power, the Grisons masters had treated their Italian dependencies with harshness. The Valtelline is an Italian valley, connected with the rest of the peninsula by ties of race and language. It is, moreover, geographically linked to Italy by the great stream of the Adda, which takes its rise upon the Stelvio, and after passing through the Lake of Como, swells the volume of the Po.

But, though politically severed from the Valtelline, the Engadiners and Davosers have not dropped their old habit of importing its best produce. What they formerly levied as masters, they now acquire by purchase. The Italian revenue derives a large profit from the frontier dues paid at the gate between Tirano and Poschiavo on the Bernina road. Much of the same wine enters Switzerland by another route, travelling from Sondrio to Chiavenna and across the Splügen. But until quite recently, the wine itself could scarcely be found outside the Canton. It was indeed quoted upon Lombard wine-lists. Yet no one drank it; and when I tasted it at Milan, I found it quite unrecognisable. The fact seems to be that the Graubündeners alone know how to deal with it; and, as I have hinted, the wine requires a mountain climate for its full development.

## II.

The district where the wine of Valtellina is grown extends, roughly speaking, from Tirano to Morbegno, a distance of some fifty-four miles. The best sorts come from the middle of this region. High up in the valley, soil and climate are alike less favourable. Low down a coarser, earthier quality springs from fat land where the valley broadens. The northern hillsides to a very considerable height above the river are covered with vineyards. The southern slopes on the left bank of the Adda, lying more in shade, yield but little. Inferno, Grumello, and Perla di Sassella are the names of famous vineyards. Sassella is the general name for a large tract. Buying an Inferno, Grumello, or Perla di Sassella wine, it would be absurd to suppose that one obtained it precisely from the eponymous estate. But as each of these vineyards yields a marked quality of wine, which is taken as standard-giving, the produce of the whole district may be broadly classified as approaching more or less nearly to one of these accepted types. The Inferno, Grumello, and Perla di Sassella of commerce are therefore three sorts of good Valtelline, ticketed with famous names to indicate certain differences of quality. Montagner, as the name implies, is a somewhat lighter wine, grown higher up in the hill-vineyards. And of this class there are many species, some approximating to Sassella in delicacy of flavour, others approaching the tart lightness of the Villa vintage. This last takes its title from a village in the neighbourhood of Tirano, where a table-wine is chiefly grown.

Forzato is the strongest, dearest, longest-lived of this whole family of wines. It is manufactured chiefly at Tirano; and, as will be understood from its name, does not profess to belong to any one of the famous localities. Forzato or



Sforzato, forced or enforced, is in fact a wine which has undergone a more artificial process. In German the people call it *Stroh-wein*, which also points to the method of its preparation. The finest grapes are selected and dried in the sun (hence the *Stroh*) for a period of eight or nine weeks. When they have almost become raisins, they are pressed. The must is heavily charged with sugar, and ferments powerfully. Wine thus made requires several years to ripen. Sweet at first, it takes at last a very fine quality and flavour, and is rough, almost acid, on the tongue. Its colour too turns from a deep rich crimson to the tone of tawny port, which indeed it much resembles.

Old Forzato, which has been long in cask, and then perhaps three years in bottle, will fetch at least six francs, or may rise to even ten francs a flask. The best Sassella rarely reaches more than five francs. Good Montagner and Grumello can be had perhaps for four francs; and Inferno of a special quality for six francs. Thus the average price of old Valtelline wine may be taken as five francs a bottle. These, I should observe, are hotel prices.

Valtelline wines bought in the wood vary, of course, according to their age and year of vintage. I have found that from 2.50 fr. to 3.50 fr. per litre is a fair price for sorts fit to bottle. The new wine of 1881 sold in the following winter at prices varying from 1.05 fr. to 1.80 fr. per litre.

It is customary for the Graubünden wine-merchants to buy up the whole produce of a vineyard from the peasants at the end of the vintage. They go in person or depute their agents to inspect the wine, make their bargains, and seal the cellars where the wine is stored. Then, when the snow has fallen, their own horses with sleighs and trusted servants go across the passes to bring it home. Generally they have some local man of confidence at Tirano, the starting-point for the homeward journey, who takes the casks up to that place and sees

them duly charged. Merchants of old standing maintain relations with the same peasants, taking their wine regularly ; so that from Lorenz Gredig at Pontresina or Andreas Gredig at Davos Dörfli, from Fanconi at Samaden, or from Giacomi at Chiavenna, special qualities of wine, the produce of certain vineyards, are to be obtained. Up to the present time this wine trade has been conducted with simplicity and honesty by both the dealers and the growers. One chief merit of Valtelline wine is that it is pure. How long so desirable a state of things will survive the slow but steady development of an export business may be questioned.

### III.

With so much practical and theoretical interest in the produce of the Valtelline to stimulate my curiosity, I determined to visit the district at the season when the wine was leaving it. It was the winter of 1881-82, a winter of unparalleled beauty in the high Alps. Day succeeded day without a cloud. Night followed night with steady stars, gliding across clear mountain ranges and forests of dark pines unstirred by wind. I could not hope for a more prosperous season ; and indeed I made such use of it, that between the months of January and March I crossed six passes of the Alps in open sleighs—the Fluela Bernina, Splügen, Julier, Maloja, and Albula, with less difficulty and discomfort in mid-winter than the traveller may often find on them in June.

At the end of January, my friend Christian and I left Davos long before the sun was up, and ascended for four hours through the interminable snow-drifts of the Fluela in a cold grey shadow. The sun's light seemed to elude us. It ran along the ravine through which we toiled ; dipped down to touch the topmost pines above our heads ; rested in golden calm upon the Schiahorn at our back ; capriciously played

here and there across the Weisshorn on our left, and made the precipices of the Schwartzhorn glitter on our right. But athwart our path it never fell until we reached the very summit of the pass. Then we passed quietly into the full glory of the winter morning—a tranquil flood of sunbeams, pouring through air of crystalline purity, frozen and motionless. White peaks and dark brown rocks soared up, cutting a sky of almost purple blueness. A stillness that might be felt brooded over the whole world; but in that stillness there was nothing sad, no suggestion of suspended vitality. It was the stillness rather of untroubled health, of strength omnipotent but unexerted.

From the Hochspitz of the Fluela the track plunges at one bound into the valley of the Inn, following a narrow cornice carved from the smooth bank of snow, and hung, without break or barrier, a thousand feet or more above the torrent. The summer road is lost in snow-drifts. The galleries built as a protection from avalanches, which sweep in rivers from those grim, bare fells above, are blocked with snow. Their useless arches yawn, as we glide over or outside them, by paths which instinct in our horse and driver traces. As a fly may creep along a house-roof, slanting downwards we descend. One whisk from the swung tail of an avalanche would hurl us, like a fly, into the ruin of the gaping gorge. But this season little snow has fallen on the higher hills; and what still lies there, is hard frozen. Therefore we have no fear, as we whirl fast and faster from the snow-fields into the black forests of gnarled cembras and wind-wearied pines. Then Süß is reached, where the Inn hurries its shallow waters clogged with ice-floes through a sleepy hamlet. The stream is pure and green; for the fountains of the glaciers are locked by winter frosts; and only clear rills from perennial sources swell its tide. At Süß we lost the sun, and toiled in garish gloom and silence, nipped by the ever-deepening cold of evening, upwards for four hours to Samaden.

The next day was spent in visiting the winter colony at San Moritz, where the Kulm Hotel, tenanted by some twenty guests, presented in its vastness the appearance of a country-house. One of the prettiest spots in the world is the ice-rink, fashioned by the skill of Herr Caspar Badrutt on a high raised terrace, commanding the valley of the Inn and the ponderous bulwarks of Bernina. The silhouettes of skaters, defined against that landscape of pure white, passed to and fro beneath a cloudless sky. Ladies sat and worked or read on seats upon the ice. Not a breath of wind was astir, and warm beneficent sunlight flooded the immeasurable air. Only, as the day declined, some iridescent films overspread the west; and just above Maloja the apparition of a mock sun—a well-defined circle of opaline light, broken at regular intervals by four globes—seemed to portend a change of weather. This forecast fortunately proved delusive. We drove back to Samaden across the silent snow, enjoying those delicate tints of rose and violet and saffron which shed enchantment for one hour over the white monotony of Alpine winter.

At half-past eight next morning, the sun was rising from behind Pitz Languard, as we crossed the Inn and drove through Pontresina in the glorious light, with all its huge hotels quite empty and none but a few country-folk abroad. Those who only know the Engadine in summer have little conception of its beauty. Winter softens the hard details of bare rock, and rounds the melancholy grassless mountain flanks, suspending icicles to every ledge and spangling the curved surfaces of snow with crystals. The landscape gains in purity, and, what sounds unbelievable, in tenderness. Nor does it lose in grandeur. Looking up the valley of the Morteratsch that morning, the glaciers were distinguishable in hues of green and sapphire through their veil of snow; and the highest peaks soared in a transparency of amethys-



tine light beneath a blue sky traced with filaments of windy cloud. Some storm must have disturbed the atmosphere in Italy, for fan-shaped mists frothed out around the sun, and curled themselves above the mountains in fine feathery wreaths, melting imperceptibly into air, until, when we had risen above the cembras, the sky was one deep solid blue.

All that upland wilderness is lovelier now than in the summer; and on the morning of which I write, the air itself was far more summery than I have ever known it in the Engadine in August. We could scarcely bear to place our hands upon the woodwork of the sleigh because of the fierce sun's heat. And yet the atmosphere was crystalline with windless frost. As though to increase the strangeness of these contrasts, the pavement of beaten snow was stained with red drops spilt from wine-casks which pass over it.

The chief feature of the Bernina—what makes it a dreary pass enough in summer, but infinitely beautiful in winter—is its breadth; illimitable undulations of snow-drifts; immensity of open sky; unbroken lines of white, descending in smooth curves from glittering ice-peaks.

A glacier hangs in air above the frozen lakes, with all its green-blue ice-cliffs glistening in intensest light. Pitz Palu shoots aloft like sculptured marble, delicately veined with soft ærial shadows of translucent blue. At the summit of the pass all Italy seems to burst upon the eyes in those steep serried ranges, with their craggy crests, violet-hued in noon-day sunshine, as though a bloom of plum or grape had been shed over them, enamelling their jagged precipices.

The top of the Bernina is not always thus in winter. It has a bad reputation for the fury of invading storms, when falling snow hurtles together with snow scooped from the drifts in eddies, and the weltering white sea shifts at the will of whirlwinds. The Hospice then may be tenanted for days together by weather-bound wayfarers; and a line drawn close

beneath its roof shows how two years ago the whole building was buried in one snow-shroud. This morning we lounged about the door, while our horses rested and postillions and carters pledged one another in cups of new Veltiner.

The road takes an awful and sudden dive downwards, quite irrespective of the carefully engineered post-track. At this season the path is badly broken into ruts and chasms by the wine traffic. In some places it was indubitably perilous : a narrow ledge of mere ice skirting thinly-clad hard-frozen banks of snow, which fell precipitately sideways for hundreds of sheer feet. We did not slip over this parapet, though we were often within an inch of doing so. Had our horse stumbled, it is not probable that I should have been writing this.

When we came to the galleries which defend the road from avalanches, we saw ahead of us a train of over forty sledges ascending, all charged with Valtelline wine. Our postillions drew up at the inner side of the gallery, between massive columns of the purest ice dependent from the rough-hewn roof and walls of rock. A sort of open *loggia* on the farther side framed vignettes of the Valtelline mountains in their hard cerulean shadows and keen sunlight. Between us and the view defiled the wine-sledges ; and as each went by, the men made us drink out of their *trinketti*. These are oblong, hexagonal wooden kegs, holding about fourteen litres, which the carter fills with wine before he leaves the Valtelline, to cheer him on the homeward journey. You raise it in both hands, and when the bung has been removed, allow the liquor to flow stream-wise down your throat. It was a most extraordinary Bacchic procession—a pomp which, though undreamed of on the banks of the Ilissus, proclaimed the deity of Dionysos in authentic fashion. Struggling horses, grappling at the ice-bound floor with sharp-spiked shoes ; huge, hoarse drivers, some clad in sheepskins from Italian valleys, some brown as bears in rough Graubünden home-spun ; casks,

dropping their spilth of red wine on the snow ; greetings, embracings ; patois of Bergamo, Romansch, and German roaring around the low-browed vaults and tingling ice pillars ; pourings forth of libations of the new strong Valtelline on breasts and beards ;—the whole made up a scene of stalwart jollity and manful labour such as I have nowhere else in such wild circumstances witnessed. Many Davosers were there, the men of Andreas Gredig, Valär, and so forth ; and all of these, on greeting Christian, forced us to drain a *Schluck* from their unmanageable cruses. Then on they went, crying, creaking, struggling, straining through the corridor, which echoed deafeningly, the gleaming crystals of those hard Italian mountains in their winter raiment building a background of still beauty to the savage Bacchanalian riot of the team.

How little the visitors who drink Valtelline wine at S. Moritz or Davos reflect by what strange ways it reaches them. A sledge can scarcely be laden with more than one cask of 300 litres on the ascent ; and this cask, according to the state of the road, has many times to be shifted from wheels to runners and back again before the journey is accomplished. One carter will take charge of two horses, and consequently of two sledges and two casks, driving them both by voice and gesture rather than by rein. When they leave the Valtelline, the carters endeavour, as far as possible, to take the pass in gangs, lest bad weather or an accident upon the road should overtake them singly. At night they hardly rest three hours, and rarely think of sleeping, but spend the time in drinking and conversation. The horses are fed and littered ; but for them too the night-halt is little better than a baiting-time. In fair weather the passage of the mountain is not difficult, though tiring. But woe to men and beasts alike if they encounter storms ! Not a few perish in the passes ; and it frequently happens that their only chance is to unyoke the horses and leave the sledges

in a snow-wreath, seeking for themselves such shelter as may possibly be gained, frost-bitten, after hours of battling with impermeable drifts. The wine is frozen into one solid mass of rosy ice before it reaches Pontresina. This does not hurt the young vintage, but it is highly injurious to wine of some years' standing. The perils of the journey are aggravated by the savage temper of the drivers. Jealousies between the natives of rival districts spring up; and there are men alive who have fought the whole way down from Fluela Hospice to Davos Platz with knives and stones, hammers and hatchets, wooden staves and splintered cart-wheels, staining the snow with blood, and bringing broken pates, bruised limbs, and senseless comrades home to their women to be tended.

Bacchus Alpinus shepherded his train away from us to northward, and we passed forth into noonday from the gallery. It then seemed clear that both conductor and postillion were sufficiently merry. The plunge they took us down those frozen parapets, with shriek and *jauchzen* and cracked whips, was more than ever dangerous. Yet we reached La Rosa safely. This is a lovely solitary spot, beside a rushing stream, among grey granite boulders grown with spruce and rhododendron: a veritable rose of Sharon blooming in the desert. The wastes of the Bernina stretch above, and round about are leaguered some of the most forbidding sharp-toothed peaks I ever saw. Onwards, across the silent snow, we glided in immitigable sunshine, through opening valleys and pine-woods, past the robber-huts of Pisciadella, until at evenfall we rested in the roadside inn at Poschiavo.



## IV.

The snow-path ended at Poschiavo; and when, as usual, we started on our journey next day at sunrise, it was in a carriage upon wheels. Yet even here we were in full mid-winter. Beyond Le Prese the lake presented one sheet of smooth black ice, reflecting every peak and chasm of the mountains, and showing the rocks and water-weeds in the clear green depths below. The glittering floor stretched away for acres of untenanted expanse, with not a skater to explore those dark mysterious coves, or strike across the slanting sunlight poured from clefts in the impendent hills. Inshore the substance of the ice sparkled here and there with iridescence like the plumelets of a butterfly's wing under the microscope, wherever light happened to catch the jagged or oblique flaws that veined its solid crystal.

From the lake the road descends suddenly for a considerable distance through a narrow gorge, following a torrent which rushes among granite boulders. Chestnut trees begin to replace the pines. The sunnier terraces are planted with tobacco, and at a lower level vines appear at intervals in patches. One comes at length to a great red gate across the road, which separates Switzerland from Italy, and where the export dues on wine are paid. The Italian custom-house is romantically perched above the torrent. Two courteous and elegant *finanzieri*, mere boys, were sitting wrapped in their military cloaks and reading novels in the sun as we drove up. Though they made some pretence of examining the luggage, they excused themselves with sweet smiles and apologetic eyes—it was a disagreeable duty!

A short time brought us to the first village in the Valtelline, where the road bifurcates northward to Bormio and the Stelvio pass, southward to Sondrio and Lombardy. It is

a little hamlet, known by the name of La Madonna di Tirano, having grown up round a pilgrimage church of great beauty, with tall Lombard bell-tower, pierced with many tiers of pilastered windows, ending in a whimsical spire, and dominating a fantastic cupola building of the earlier Renaissance. Taken altogether, this is a charming bit of architecture, picturesquely set beneath the granite snow-peaks of the Valtelline. The church, they say, was raised at Madonna's own command to stay the tide of heresy descending from the Engadine; and in the year 1620, the bronze statue of S. Michael, which still spreads wide its wings above the cupola, looked down upon the massacre of six hundred Protestants and foreigners, commanded by the patriot Jacopo Robustelli.

From Madonna the road leads up the valley through a narrow avenue of poplar-trees to the town of Tirano. We were now in the district where Forzato is made, and every vineyard had a name and history. In Tirano we betook ourself to the house of an old acquaintance of the Buol family, Bernardo da Campo, or, as the Graubündeners call him, Bernard Campbèll. We found him at dinner with his son and grandchildren in a vast, dark, bare Italian chamber. It would be difficult to find a more typical old Scotchman of the Lowlands than he looked, with his clean close-shaven face, bright brown eyes, and snow-white hair escaping from a broad-brimmed hat. He might have sat to a painter for some Covenanter's portrait, except that there was nothing dour about him, or for an illustration to Burns' "Cotter's Saturday Night." The air of probity and caninness combined with a twinkle of dry humour was completely Scotch; and when he tapped his snuff-box, telling stories of old days, I could not refrain from asking him about his pedigree. It should be said that there is a considerable family of Campèlls or Campbèlls in the Graubünden, who are fabled to deduce their stock from a Scotch Protestant of Zwingli's

time; and this made it irresistible to imagine that in our friend Bernardo I had chanced upon a notable specimen of atavism. All he knew, however, was, that his first ancestor had been a foreigner, who came across the mountains to Tirano two centuries ago.\*

This old gentleman is a considerable wine-dealer. He sent us with his son, Giacomo, on a long journey underground through his cellars, where we tasted several sorts of Valteline, especially the new Forzato, made a few weeks since, which singularly combines sweetness with strength, and both with a slight effervescence. It is certainly the sort of wine wherewith to tempt a Polyphemus, and not unapt to turn a giant's head.

Leaving Tirano, and once more passing through the poplars by Madonna, we descended the valley all along the vineyards of Villa and the vast district of Sassella. Here and there, at wayside inns, we stopped to drink a glass of some particular vintage; and everywhere it seemed as though god Bacchus were at home. The whole valley on the right side of the Adda is one gigantic vineyard, climbing the hills in tiers and terraces, which justify its Italian epithet of *Teatro di Bacco*. The rock is a greyish granite, assuming sullen brown and orange tints where exposed to sun and weather. The vines are grown on stakes, not trellised over trees or carried across boulders, as is the fashion at Chiavenna or Terlan. Yet every advantage of the mountain is adroitly used; nooks and crannies being specially preferred, where the sun's rays are deflected from hanging cliffs. The soil seems deep, and is of a dull yellow tone. When the vines end, brushwood takes up the growth, which expires at last in crag and snow. Some

\* The Grisons surname Campèll may derive from the Romansch Campo Bello. The founder of the house was one Kaspar Campèll, who in the first half of the sixteenth century preached the Reformed religion in the Engadine.

alps and chalets, dimly traced against the sky, are evidences that a pastoral life prevails above the vineyards. Pan there stretches the pine-thyrus down to vine-garlanded Dionysos.

The Adda flows majestically among willows in the midst, and the valley is nearly straight. The prettiest spot, perhaps, is at Tresenda or S. Giacomo, where a pass from Edolo and Brescia descends from the southern hills. But the Valtelline has no great claim to beauty of scenery. Its chief town, Sondrio, where we supped and drank some special wine called *il vino de' Signori Grigioni*, has been modernised in dull Italian fashion.

## V.

The hotel at Sondrio, La Maddalena, was in carnival uproar of masquers, toppers, and musicians all night through. It was as much as we could do to rouse the sleepy servants and get a cup of coffee ere we started in the frozen dawn. "Verfluchte Maddalena!" grumbled Christian as he shouldered our portmanteaus and bore them in hot haste to the post. Long experience only confirms the first impression, that, of all cold, the cold of an Italian winter is most penetrating. As we lumbered out of Sondrio in a heavy diligence, I could have fancied myself back once again at Radicofani or among the Ciminian hills. The frost was penetrating. Fur-coats would not keep it out; and we longed to be once more in open sledges on Bernina rather than enclosed in that cold coupé. Now we passed Grumello, the second largest of the renowned vine districts; and always keeping the white mass of Monte di Disgrazia in sight, rolled at last into Morbegno. Here the Valtelline vintage properly ends, though much of the ordinary wine is probably supplied from the inferior produce of these fields. It was past noon when we reached Colico,



and saw the Lake of Como glittering in sunlight, dazzling cloaks of snow on all the mountains, which look as dry and brown as dead beech-leaves at this season. Our Bacchic journey had reached its close; and it boots not here to tell in detail how we made our way across the Splügen, piercing its avalanches by low-arched galleries scooped from the solid snow, and careering in our sledges down perpendicular snow-fields, which no one who has crossed that pass from the Italian side in winter will forget. We left the refuge station at the top together with a train of wine-sledges, and passed them in the midst of the wild descent. Looking back, I saw two of their horses stumble in the plunge and roll headlong over. Unluckily in one of these summersaults a man was injured. Flung ahead into the snow by the first lurch, the sledge and wine-cask crossed him like a garden-roller. Had his bed not been of snow, he must have been crushed to death; and as it was, he presented a woeful appearance when he afterwards arrived at Splügen.

## VI.

Though not strictly connected with the subject of this paper, I shall conclude these notes of winter wanderings in the high Alps with an episode which illustrates their curious vicissitudes.

It was late in the month of March, and nearly all the mountain roads were open for wheeled vehicles. A carriage and four horses came to meet us at the termination of a railway journey in Ragatz. We spent one day in visiting old houses of the Grisons aristocracy at Mayenfeld and Zizers, rejoicing in the early sunshine, which had spread the fields with spring flowers—primroses and oxlips, violets, anemones, and bright blue squills. At Chur we slept, and early next

morning started for our homeward drive to Davos. Bad weather had declared itself in the night. It blew violently, and the rain soon changed to snow, frozen by a bitter north blast. Crossing the dreary heath of Lenz was both magnificent and dreadful. By the time we reached Wiesen, all the forests were laden with snow, the roads deep in snow-drifts, the whole scene wintrier than it had been the winter through.

At Wiesen we should have stayed, for evening was fast setting in. But in ordinary weather it is only a two hours' drive from Wiesen to Davos. Our coachman made no objections to resuming the journey, and our four horses had but a light load to drag. So we telegraphed for supper to be prepared, and started between five and six.

A deep gorge has to be traversed, where the torrent cleaves its way between jaws of limestone precipices. The road is carried along ledges and through tunnels in the rock. Avalanches, which sweep this passage annually from the hills above, give it the name of Züge, or the Snow-Paths. As we entered the gorge darkness fell, the horses dragged more heavily, and it soon became evident that our Tyrolese driver was hopelessly drunk. He nearly upset us twice by taking sharp turns in the road, banged the carriage against telegraph posts and jutting rocks, shaved the very verge of the torrent in places where there was no parapet, and, what was worst of all, refused to leave his box without a fight. The darkness by this time was all but total, and a blinding snow-storm swept howling through the ravine. At length we got the carriage to a dead-stop, and floundered out in deep wet snow toward some wooden huts where miners in old days made their habitation. The place, by a curious, perhaps unconscious irony, is called Hoffnungsau, or the Meadow of Hope. Indeed, it is not ill named; for many wanderers, escaping, as we did, from the dreadful gorge of Avalanches on a stormy

night, may have felt, as we now felt, their hope reviving when they reached this shelter.

There was no light; nothing above, beneath, around, on any side, but tearing tempest and snow whirled through the ravine. The horses were taken out of the carriage; on their way to the stable, which fortunately in these mountain regions will be always found beside the poorest habitation, one of them fell back across a wall and nearly broke his spine. Hoffnungsau is inhabited all through the year. In its dismal dark kitchen we found a knot of workmen gathered together, and heard there were two horses on the premises besides our own. It then occurred to us that we might accomplish the rest of the journey with such sledges as they bring the wood on from the hills in winter, if coal-boxes or boxes of any sort could be provided. These should be lashed to the sledges and filled with hay. We were only four persons; my wife and a friend should go in one, myself and my little girl in the other. No sooner thought of than put into practice. These original conveyances were improvised, and after two hours' halt on the Meadow of Hope, we all set forth again at half-past eight.

I have rarely felt anything more piercing than the grim cold of that journey. We crawled at a foot's pace through changeful snowdrifts. The road was obliterated, and it was my duty to keep a petroleum stable-lamp swinging to illuminate the untracked wilderness. My little girl was snugly nested in the hay, and sound asleep with a deep white covering of snow above her. Meanwhile, the drift clave in frozen masses to our faces, lashed by a wind so fierce and keen that it was difficult to breathe it. My forehead-bone ached, as though with neuralgia, from the mere mask of icy snow upon it, plastered on with frost. Nothing could be seen but millions of white specks, whirled at us in eddying concentric circles. Not far from the entrance to the village we met our house-

folk out with lanterns to look for us. It was past eleven at night when at last we entered warm rooms and refreshed ourselves for the tiring day with a jovial champagne supper. Horses, carriage, and drunken driver reached home next morning.



## WINTER NIGHTS AT DAVOS.

### I.

LIGHT, marvellously soft yet penetrating, everywhere diffused, everywhere reflected without radiance, poured from the moon high above our heads in a sky tinted through all shades and modulations of blue, from turquoise on the horizon to opaque sapphire at the zenith—*dolce color*. (It is difficult to use the word *colour* for this scene without suggesting an exaggeration. The blue is almost indefinable, yet felt. But if possible, the total effect of the night landscape should be rendered by careful exclusion of tints from the word-palette. The art of the etcher is more needed than that of the painter.) Heaven overhead is set with stars, shooting intensely, smouldering with dull red in Aldeboran, sparkling diamond-like in Sirius, changing from orange to crimson and green in the swart fire of yonder double star. On the snow this moonlight falls tenderly, not in hard white light and strong black shadow, but in tones of cream and ivory, rounding the curves of drift. The mountain peaks alone glisten as though they were built of silver burnished by an agate. Far away they rise diminished in stature by the all-pervading dimness of bright light, that erases the distinctions of daytime. On the path before our feet lie crystals of many hues, the splinters of a thousand gems. In the wood there are caverns of darkness, alternating with spaces of star-twinkled sky, or windows opened between russet stems and solid branches for the

moony sheen. The green of the pines is felt, although invisible, so soft in substance that it seems less like velvet than some materialised depth of dark green shadow.

## II.

Snow falling noiseless and unseen. One only knows that it is falling by the blinking of our eyes as the flakes settle on their lids and melt. The cottage windows shine red, and moving lanterns of belated wayfarers define the void around them. Yet the night is far from dark. The forests and the mountain-bulk beyond the valley loom softly large and just distinguishable through a pearly haze. The path is purest trackless whiteness, almost dazzling though it has no light. This was what Dante felt when he reached the lunar sphere :

Pareva a me, che nube ne coprisse  
Lucida, spessa, solida e pulita.

Walking silent, with insensible footfall, slowly, for the snow is deep above our ankles, we wonder what the world would be like if this were all. Could the human race be acclimatised to this monotony (we say) perhaps emotion would be rarer, yet more poignant, suspended brooding on itself, and wakening by flashes to a quintessential mood. Then fancy changes, and the thought occurs that even so must be a planet, not yet wholly made, nor called to take her place among the sisterhood of light and song.

## III.

Sunset was fading out upon the Rhætikon and still reflected from the Seehorn on the lake, when we entered the gorge of the Fluela—dense pines on either hand, a mounting drift of snow in front, and faint peaks, paling from rose to saffron,

far above, beyond. There was no sound but a tinkling stream and the continual jingle of our sledge-bells. We drove at a foot's pace, our horse finding his own path. When we left the forest, the light had all gone except for some almost imperceptible touches of primrose on the eastern horns. It was a moonless night, but the sky was alive with stars, and now and then one fell. The last house in the valley was soon passed, and we entered those bleak gorges where the wind, fine, noiseless, penetrating like an edge of steel, poured slantwise on us from the north. As we rose, the stars to west seemed far beneath us, and the Great Bear sprawled upon the ridges of the lower hills outspread. We kept slowly moving onward, upward, into what seemed like a thin impalpable mist, but was immeasurable tracts of snow. The last cembras were left behind, immovable upon dark granite boulders on our right. We entered a formless and unbillowed sea of greyness, from which there rose dim mountain-flanks that lost themselves in air. Up, ever up, and still below us westward sank the stars. We were now 7500 feet above sea-level, and the December night was rigid with intensity of frost. The cold, and movement, and solemnity of space drowsed every sense.

#### IV.

The memory of things seen and done in moonlight is like the memory of dreams. It is as a dream that I recall the night of our tobogganing to Klosters, though it was full enough of active energy. The moon was in her second quarter, slightly filmed with very high thin clouds, that disappeared as night advanced, leaving the sky and stars in all their lustre. A sharp frost, sinking to three degrees above zero Fahrenheit, with a fine pure wind, such wind as here they call "the mountain breath." We drove to Wolfgang in a two-horse sledge,

four of us inside, and our two Christians on the box. Up there, where the Alps of Death descend to join the Lakehorn Alps, above the Wolfswalk, there is a world of whiteness—frozen ridges, engraved like cameos of ærial onyx upon the dark, star-tremulous sky ; sculptured buttresses of snow, enclosing hollows filled with diaphanous shadow, and sweeping aloft into the upland fields of pure clear drift. Then came the swift descent, the plunge into the pines, moon-silvered on their frosted tops. The battalions of spruce that climb those hills defined the dazzling snow from which they sprang, like the black tufts upon an ermine robe. At the proper moment we left our sledge, and the big Christian took his reins in hand to follow us. Furs and greatcoats were abandoned. Each stood forth tightly accoutred, with short coat, and clinging cap, and gaitered legs for the toboggin. Off we started in line, with but brief interval between, at first slowly, then glidingly, and when the impetus was gained, with darting, bounding, almost savage swiftness—sweeping round corners, cutting the hard snow-path with keen runners, avoiding the deep ruts, trusting to chance, taking advantage of smooth places, till the rush and swing and downward swoop became mechanical. Space was devoured. Into the massy shadows of the forest, where the pines joined overhead, we pierced without a sound, and felt far more than saw the great rocks with their icicles ; and out again, emerging into moonlight, met the valley spread beneath our feet, the mighty peaks of the Silvretta and the vast blue sky. On, on, hurrying, delaying not, the woods and hills rushed by. Crystals upon the snow-banks glittered to the stars. Our souls would fain have stayed to drink these marvels of the moon-world, but our limbs refused. The magic of movement was upon us, and eight minutes swallowed the varying impressions of two musical miles. The village lights drew near and nearer, then the sombre village huts, and soon the speed grew less, and soon we glided to our rest into the sleeping village street.



## V.

It was just past midnight. The moon had fallen to the western horns. Orion's belt lay bar-like on the opening of the pass, and Sirius shot flame on the Seehorn. A more crystalline night, more full of fulgent stars, was never seen, stars everywhere, but mostly scattered in large sparkles on the snow. Big Christian went in front, tugging toboggins by their strings, as Gulliver, in some old woodcut, drew the fleets of Lilliput. Through the brown wood-châlets of Selfrangr, up to the undulating meadows, where the snow slept pure and crisp, he led us. There we sat awhile and drank the clear air, cooled to zero, but innocent and mild as mother Nature's milk. Then in an instant, down, down through the hamlet, with its châlets, stables, pumps, and logs, the slumbrous hamlet, where one dog barked, and darkness dwelt upon the path of ice, down with the tempest of a dreadful speed, that shot each rider upward in the air, and made the frame of the toboggin tremble—down over hillocks of hard frozen snow, dashing and bounding, to the river and the bridge. No bones were broken, though the race was thrice renewed, and men were spilt upon the roadside by some furious plunge. This amusement has the charm of peril and the unforeseen. In no wise else can colder, keener air be drunken at such furious speed. The joy, too, of the engine-driver and the steeplechaser is upon us. Alas, that it should be so short! If only roads were better made for the purpose, there would be no end to it; for the toboggin cannot lose his wind. But the good thing fails at last, and from the silence of the moon we pass into the silence of the fields of sleep.

## VI.

The new stable is a huge wooden building, with raftered lofts to stow the hay, and stalls for many cows and horses. It stands snugly in an angle of the pine-wood, bordering upon the great horse-meadow. Here at night the air is warm and tepid with the breath of kine. Returning from my forest walk, I spy one window yellow in the moonlight with a lamp. I lift the latch. The hound knows me, and does not bark. I enter the stable, where six horses are munching their last meal. Upon the corn-bin sits a knecht. We light our pipes and talk. He tells me of the valley of Arosa (a hawk's flight westward over yonder hills), how deep in grass its summer lawns, how crystal-clear its stream, how blue its little lakes, how pure, without a taint of mist, "too beautiful to paint," its sky in winter ! This knecht is an Ardüser, and the valley of Arosa lifts itself to heaven above his Langwies home. It is his duty now to harness a sleigh for some night-work. We shake hands and part—I to sleep, he for the snow.

## VII.

The lake has frozen late this year, and there are places in it where the ice is not yet firm. Little snow has fallen since it froze—about three inches at the deepest, driven by winds and wrinkled like the ribbed sea-sand. Here and there the ice-floor is quite black and clear, reflecting stars, and dark as heaven's own depths. Elsewhere it is of a suspicious whiteness, blurred in surface, with jagged cracks and chasms, treacherously mended by the hand of frost. Moving slowly, the snow cries beneath our feet, and the big crystals tinkle. These are shaped like fern-fronds, growing fan-wise from a point, and set at various angles, so that the moonlight takes

them with capricious touch. They flash, and are quenched, and flash again, light darting to light along the level surface, while the sailing planets and the stars look down complacent at this mimicry of heaven. Everything above, around, beneath, is very beautiful—the slumbrous woods, the snowy fells, and the far distance painted in faint blue upon the tender background of the sky. Everything is placid and beautiful; and yet the place is terrible. For, as we walk, the lake groans, with throttled sobs, and sudden cracklings of its joints, and sighs that shiver, undulating from afar, and pass beneath our feet, and die away in distance when they reach the shore. And now and then an upper crust of ice gives way; and will the gulfs then drag us down? We are in the very centre of the lake. There is no use in thinking or in taking heed. Enjoy the moment, then, and march. Enjoy the contrast between this circumambient serenity and sweetness, and the dreadful sense of insecurity beneath. Is not, indeed, our whole life of this nature? A passage over perilous deeps, roofed by infinity and sempiternal things, surrounded too with evanescent forms, that like these crystals, trodden underfoot, or melted by the Föhn-wind into dew, flash, in some lucky moment, with a light that mimics stars! But to allegorise and sermonise is out of place here. It is but the expedient of those who cannot etch sensation by the burin of their art of words.

## VIII.

It is ten o'clock upon Sylvester Abend, or New Year's Eve. Herr Buol sits with his wife at the head of his long table. His family and serving folk are round him. There is his mother, with little Ursula, his child, upon her knee. The old lady is the mother of four comely daughters and nine stalwart sons, the eldest of whom is now a grizzled man. Besides our

host, four of the brothers are here to-night ; the handsome melancholy Georg, who is so gentle in his speech ; Simeon, with his diplomatic face ; Florian, the student of medicine ; and my friend, colossal-breasted Christian. Palmy came a little later, worried with many cares, but happy to his heart's core. No optimist was ever more convinced of his philosophy than Palmy. After them, below the salt, were ranged the knechts and porters, the marmiton from the kitchen, and innumerable maids. The board was tessellated with plates of birnen-brod and eier-brod, küchli and cheese and butter ; and Georg stirred grampampuli in a mighty metal bowl. For the uninitiated, it may be needful to explain these Davos delicacies. Birnen-brod is what the Scotch would call a "bun," or massive cake, composed of sliced pears, almonds, spices, and a little flour. Eier-brod is a saffron-coloured sweet bread, made with eggs ; and küchli is a kind of pastry, crisp and flimsy, fashioned into various devices of cross, star and scroll. Grampampuli is simply brandy burnt with sugar, the most unsophisticated punch I every drank from tumblers. The frugal people of Davos, who live on bread and cheese and dried meat all the year, indulge themselves but once with these unwonted dainties in the winter.

The occasion was cheerful, and yet a little solemn. The scene was feudal. For these Buols are the scions of a warrior race :

A race illustrious for heroic deeds ;  
Humbled, but not degraded.

During the six centuries through which they have lived nobles in Davos, they have sent forth scores of fighting men to foreign lands, ambassadors to France and Venice and the Milanese, governors to Chiavenna and Bregaglia and the much-contested Valtelline. Members of their house are Counts of Buol-Schauenstein in Austria, Freiherrs of Muhlingen and Berenberg in the now German Empire. They



keep the patent of nobility conferred on them by Henri IV. Their ancient coat—parted per pale azure and argent, with a dame of the fourteenth century bearing in her hand a rose, all counterchanged—is carved in wood and monumental marble on the churches and old houses hereabouts. And from immemorial antiquity the Buol of Davos has sat thus on Sylvester Abend with family and folk around him, summoned from alp and snowy field to drink grampampuli and break the birnen-brod.

These rites performed, the men and maids began to sing—brown arms lounging on the table, and red hands folded in white aprons—serious at first in hymn-like cadences, then breaking into wilder measures with a jodel at the close. There is a measured solemnity in the performance, which strikes the stranger as somewhat comic. But the singing was good; the voices strong and clear in tone, no hesitation and no shirking of the melody. It was clear that the singers enjoyed the music for its own sake, with half-shut eyes, as they take dancing, solidly, with deep-drawn breath, sustained and indefatigable. But eleven struck; and the two Christians, my old friend, and Palmy, said we should be late for church. They had promised to take me with them to see bell-ringing in the tower. All the young men of the village meet, and draw lots in the Stube of the Rathhaus. One party tolls the old year out; the other rings the new year in. He who comes last is sconced three litres of Veltliner for the company. This jovial fine was ours to pay to-night.

When we came into the air, we found a bitter frost; the whole sky clouded over; a north wind whirling snow from alp and forest through the murky gloom. The benches and broad walnut tables of the Rathhaus were crowded with men, in shaggy homespun of brown and grey frieze. Its low wooden roof and walls enclosed an atmosphere of smoke,

denser than the external snow-drift. But our welcome was hearty, and we found a score of friends. Titanic Fopp, whose limbs are Michelangesque in length; spectacled Morosani; the little tailor Kramer, with a French horn on his knees; the puckered forehead of the Baumeister; the Troll-shaped postman; peasants and woodmen, known on far excursions upon pass and upland valley. Not one but carried on his face the memory of winter strife with avalanche and snowdrift, of horses struggling through Fluella whirlwinds, and wine-casks tugged across Bernina, and haystacks guided down precipitous gullies at thundering speed 'twixt pine and pine, and larches felled in distant glens beside the frozen watercourses. Here we were, all met together for one hour from our several homes and occupations, to welcome in the year with clinked glasses and cries of *Prosit Neujahr!*

The tolling bells above us stopped. Our turn had come. Out into the snowy air we tumbled, beneath the row of wolves' heads that adorn the pent-house roof. A few steps brought us to the still God's acre, where the snow lay deep and cold upon high-mounded graves of many generations. We crossed it silently, bent our heads to the low Gothic arch, and stood within the tower. It was thick darkness there. But far above, the bells began again to clash and jangle confusedly, with volleys of demonic joy. Successive flights of ladders, each ending in a giddy platform hung across the gloom, climb to the height of some hundred and fifty feet; and all their rungs were crusted with frozen snow, deposited by trampling boots. For up and down these stairs, ascending and descending, moved other than angels—the freeze-jacketed Bürschen, Grisons bears, rejoicing in their exercise, exhilarated with the tingling noise of beaten metal. We reached the first room safely, guided by firm-footed Christian, whose one candle just defined the rough walls and the slippery steps. There we found a band of boys, pulling ropes,

that set the bells in motion. But our destination was not reached. One more aërial ladder, perpendicular in darkness, brought us swiftly to the home of sound. It is a small square chamber, where the bells are hung, filled with the interlacement of enormous beams, and pierced to north and south by open windows, from whose parapets I saw the village and the valley spread beneath. The fierce wind hurried through it, charged with snow, and its narrow space was thronged with men. Men on the platform, men on the window-sills, men grappling the bells with iron arms, men brushing by to reach the stairs, crossing, recrossing, shouldering their mates, drinking red wine from gigantic beakers, exploding crackers, firing squibs, shouting and yelling in corybantic chorus. They yelled and shouted, one could see it by their open mouths and glittering eyes; but not a sound from human lungs could reach our ears. The overwhelming incessant thunder of the bells drowned all. It thrilled the tympanum, ran through the marrow of the spine, vibrated in the inmost entrails. Yet the brain was only steadied and excited by this sea of brazen noise. After a few moments I knew the place and felt at home in it. Then I enjoyed a spectacle which sculptors might have envied. For they ring the bells in Davos after this fashion:—The lads below set them going with ropes. The men above climb in pairs on ladders to the beams from which they are suspended. Two mighty pine-trees, roughly squared and built into the walls, extend from side to side across the belfry. Another from which the bells hang, connects these massive trunks at right angles. Just where the central beam is wedged into the two parallel supports, the ladders reach them from each side of the belfry, so that, bending from the higher rung of the ladder, and leaning over, stayed upon the lateral beam, each pair of men can keep one bell in movement with their hands. Each comrade plants one leg upon the ladder, and sets the other knee firmly

athwart the horizontal pine. Then round each other's waist they twine left arm and right. The two have thus become one man. Right arm and left are free to grasp the bell's horns, sprouting at its crest beneath the beam. With a grave rhythmic motion, bending sideward in a close embrace, swaying and returning to their centre from the well-knit loins, they drive the force of each strong muscle into the vexed bell. The impact is earnest at first, but soon it becomes frantic. The men take something from each other of exalted enthusiasm. This efflux of their combined energies inspires them and exasperates the mighty resonance of metal which they rule. They are lost in a trance of what approximates to dervish passion—so thrilling is the surge of sound, so potent are the rhythms they obey. Men come and tug them by the heels. One grasps the starting thews upon their calves. Another is impatient for their place. But they strain still, locked together, and forgetful of the world. At length they have enough: then slowly, clingingly unclasp, turn round with gazing eyes, and are resumed, sedately, into the diurnal round of common life. Another pair is in their room upon the beam.

The Englishman who saw these things stood looking up, enveloped in his ulster with the grey cowl thrust upon his forehead, like a monk. One candle cast a grotesque shadow of him on the plastered wall. And when his chance came, though he was but a weakling, he too climbed and for some moments hugged the beam, and felt the madness of the swinging bell. Descending, he wondered long and strangely whether he ascribed too much of feeling to the men he watched. But no, that was impossible. There are emotions deeply seated in the joy of exercise, when the body is brought into play, and masses move in concert, of which the subject is but half conscious. Music and dance, and the delirium of battle or the chase, act thus upon spontaneous natures. The mystery of rhythm and associated energy and blood tingling



in sympathy is here. It lies at the root of man's most tyrannous instinctive impulses.

It was past one when we reached home, and now a meditative man might well have gone to bed. But no one thinks of sleeping on Sylvester Abend. So there followed bowls of punch in one friend's room, where English, French, and Germans blent together in convivial Babel; and flasks of old Montagner in another. Palmy, at this period, wore an arch-deacon's hat, and smoked a churchwarden's pipe; and neither were his own, nor did he derive anything ecclesiastical or Anglican from the association. Late in the morning we must sally forth, they said, and roam the town. For it is the custom here on New Year's night to greet acquaintances, and ask for hospitality, and no one may deny these self-invited guests. We turned out again into the grey snow-swept gloom, a curious Comus—not at all like Greeks, for we had neither torches in our hands nor rose-wreaths to suspend upon a lady's door-posts. And yet I could not refrain, at this supreme moment of jollity, in the zero temperature, amid my Grisons friends, from humming to myself verses from the Greek Anthology :—

The die is cast ! Nay, light the torch !  
 I'll take the road ! Up, courage, ho !  
 Why linger pondering in the porch ?  
 Upon Love's revel we will go !

Shake off those fumes of wine ! Hang care  
 And caution ! What has Love to do  
 With prudence ? Let the torches flare !  
 Quick, drown the doubts that hampered you !

Cast weary wisdom to the wind !  
 One thing, but one alone, I know :  
 Love bent e'en Jove and made him blind !  
 Upon Love's revel we will go !

And then again :—

I've drunk sheer madness ! Not with wine,  
 But old fantastic tales, I'll arm  
 My heart in heedlessness divine,  
 And dare the road, nor dream of harm !

I'll join Love's rout ! Let thunder break,  
 Let lightning blast me by the way !  
 Invulnerable Love shall shake  
 His ægis o'er my head to-day.

This last epigram was not inappropriate to an invalid about to begin the fifth act in a roystering night's adventure. And still once more :—

Cold blows the winter wind ; 'tis Love,  
 Whose sweet eyes swim with honeyed tears,  
 That bears me to thy doors, my love,  
 Tossed by the storm of hopes and fears.

Cold blows the blast of aching Love ;  
 But be thou for my wandering sail,  
 Adrift upon these waves of love,  
 Safe harbour from the whistling gale !

However, upon this occasion, though we had winter-wind enough, and cold enough, there was not much love in the business. My arm was firmly clenched in Christian Buol's, and Christian Palmy came behind, trolling out songs in Italian dialect, with still recurring *canaille* choruses, of which the facile rhymes seemed mostly made on a prolonged *amu-u-u-r*. It is noticeable that Italian ditties are specially designed for fellows shouting in the streets at night. They seem in keeping there, and nowhere else that I could ever see. And these Davosers took to them naturally when the time for Comus came. It was between four and five in the morning, and nearly all the houses in the place were dark. The tall church-tower and spire loomed up above us in grey twilight. The tireless wind still swept thin snow from fell and forest. But the frenzied bells had sunk into their twelvemonth's slumber, which shall be broken only by decorous tollings at less festive times. I wondered whether they were tingling still with the heart-

throbs and with the pressure of those many arms? Was their old age warmed, as mine was, with that gust of life—the young men who had clung to them like bees to lily-bells, and shaken all their locked-up tone and shrillness into the wild winter air? Alas! how many generations of the young have handled them; and they are still there, frozen in their belfry; and the young grow middle-aged, and old, and die at last; and the bells they grappled in their lust of manhood toll them to their graves, on which the tireless wind will, winter after winter, sprinkle snow from alps and forests which they knew.

“There is a light,” cried Christian, “up in Anna’s window!” “A light! a light!” the Comus shouted. But how to get at the window, which is pretty high above the ground, and out of reach of the most ardent revellers? We search a neighbouring shed, extract a stable-ladder, and in two seconds Palmy has climbed to the topmost rung, while Christian and Georg hold it firm upon the snow beneath. Then begins a passage from some comic opera of Mozart’s or Cimarosa’s—an escapade familiar to Spanish or Italian students, which recalls the stage. It is an episode from “Don Giovanni,” translated to this dark-etched scene of snowy hills, and Gothic tower, and mullioned windows deep embayed beneath their eaves and icicles. *Deh vieni alla finestra!* sings Palmy-Leporello; the chorus answers: *Deh vieni! Perchè non vieni ancora?* pleads Leporello; the chorus shouts: *Perchè? Mio amu-u-u-r*, sighs Leporello; and Echo cries, *amu-u-u-r!* All the wooing, be it noticed, is conducted in Italian. But the actors murmur to each other in Davoser Deutsch, “She won’t come, Palmy! It is far too late; she is gone to bed. Come down; you’ll wake the village with your caterwauling!” But Leporello waves his broad archdeacon’s hat, and resumes a flood of flexible Bregaglian. He has a shrewd suspicion that the girl is peeping from behind the

window curtain ; and tells us, bending down from the ladder, in a hoarse stage-whisper, that we must have patience ; “these girls are kittle cattle, who take long to draw : but if your lungs last out, they’re sure to show.” And Leporello is right. Faint heart ne’er won fair lady. From the summit of his ladder, by his eloquent Italian tongue, he brings the shy bird down at last. We hear the unbarring of the house door, and a comely maiden, in her Sunday dress, welcomes us politely to her ground-floor sitting-room. The Comus enters, in grave order, with set speeches, handshakes, and inevitable *Prosits* ! It is a large low chamber, with a huge stone stove, wide benches fixed along the walls, and a great oval table. We sit how and where we can. Red wine is produced, and eier-brod and küchli. Fräulein Anna serves us sedately, holding her own with decent self-respect against the inrush of the revellers. She is quite alone ; but are not her father and mother in bed above, and within earshot ? Besides, the Comus, even at this abnormal hour and after an abnormal night, is well conducted. Things seem slipping into a decorous wine-party, when Leporello readjusts the broad-brimmed hat upon his head, and very cleverly acts a little love-scene for our benefit. Fräulein Anna takes this as a delicate compliment, and the thing is so prettily done in truth, that not the sternest taste could be offended. Meanwhile another party of night-wanderers, attracted by our mirth, break in. More *Prosits* and clinked glasses follow ; and with a fair good-morning to our hostess, we retire.

It is too late to think of bed. “The quincunx of heaven,” as Sir Thomas Browne phrased it on a dissimilar occasion, “runs low. . . . The huntsmen are up in America ;” and not in America only, for the huntsmen, if there are any this night in Graubünden, have long been out upon the snow, and the stable-lads are dragging the sledges from their sheds to carry down the mails to Landquart. We meet the porters from the



various hotels, bringing letter-bags and luggage to the post. It is time to turn in and take a cup of black coffee against the rising sun.

## IX.

Some nights, even in Davos, are spent, even by an invalid, in bed. A leaflet, therefore, of "Sleep-chasings" may not inappropriately be flung, as envoy to so many wanderings on foot and sledge upon the winter snows.

The first is a confused medley of things familiar and things strange. I have been dreaming of far-away old German towns, with gabled houses deep in snow; dreaming of châteaux in forgotten Alpine glens, where wood-cutters come plunging into sleepy light from gloom, and sinking down beside the stove to shake the drift from their rough shoulders; dreaming of vast veils of icicles upon the gaunt black rocks in places where no foot of man will pass, and where the snow is weaving eyebrows over the ledges of grey whirlwind-beaten precipices; dreaming of Venice, forlorn beneath the windy drip of rain, the gas lamps flickering on the swimming piazzetta, the barche idle, the gondolier wrapped in his thread-bare cloak, alone; dreaming of Apennines, with world-old cities, brown, above the brown sea of dead chestnut boughs; dreaming of stormy tides, and watchers aloft in lighthouses when day is finished; dreaming of dead men and women and dead children in the earth, far down beneath the snow-drifts, six feet deep. And then I lift my face, awaking, from my pillow; the pallid moon is on the valley, and the room is filled with spectral light.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is a hospice in an unfrequented pass, between sad peaks, beside a little black lake, overdrifted with soft snow. I pass into the house-room, gliding silently. An old man and an old woman are nodding,

bowed in deepest slumber, by the stove. A young man plays the zither on a table. He lifts his head, still modulating with his fingers on the strings. He looks right through me with wide anxious eyes. He does not see me, but sees Italy, I know, and some one wandering on a sandy shore.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is S. Stephen's Church in Wien. Inside, the lamps are burning dimly in the choir. There is fog in the aisles; but through the sleepy air and over the red candles flies a wild soprano's voice, a boy's soul in its singing sent to heaven.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. From the mufflers in which his father, the mountebank, has wrapped the child, to carry him across the heath, a little tumbling-boy emerges in soiled tights. He is half asleep. His father scrapes the fiddle. The boy shortens his red belt, kisses his fingers to us, and ties himself into a knot among the glasses on the table.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. I am on the parapet of a huge circular tower, hollow like a well, and pierced with windows at irregular intervals. The parapet is broad, and slabbed with red Verona marble. Around me are athletic men, all naked, in the strangest attitudes of studied rest, down-gazing, as I do, into the depths below. There comes a confused murmur of voices, and the tower is threaded and rethreaded with great cables. Up these there climb to us a crowd of young men, clinging to the ropes and flinging their bodies sideways on aerial trapezes. My heart trembles with keen joy and terror. For nowhere else could plastic forms be seen more beautiful, and nowhere else is peril more apparent. Leaning my chin upon the utmost verge, I wait. I watch one youth, who smiles and soars to me; and when his face is almost touching mine, he speaks, but what he says I know not.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. The whole world rocks

to its foundations. The mountain summits that I know are shaken. They bow their bristling crests. They are falling, falling on us, and the earth is riven. I wake in terror, shouting: *INSOLITIS TREMUERUNT MOTIBUS ALPES!* An earthquake, slight but real, has stirred the ever-wakeful Vesta of the brain to this Virgilian quotation.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. Once more at night I sledge alone upon the Klosters road. It is the point where the woods close over it and moonlight may not pierce the boughs. There come shrill cries of many voices from behind, and rushings that pass by and vanish. Then on their sledges I behold the phantoms of the dead who died in Davos, longing for their homes; and each flies past me, shrieking in the still cold air; and phosphorescent like long meteors, the pageant turns the windings of the road below and disappears.

I sleep, and change my dreaming. This is the top of some high mountain, where the crags are cruelly tortured and cast in enormous splinters on the ledges of cliffs grey with old-world ice. A ravine, opening at my feet, plunges down immeasurably to a dim and distant sea. Above me soars a precipice embossed with a gigantic ice-bound shape. As I gaze thereon, I find the lineaments and limbs of a Titanic man chained and nailed to the rock. His beard has grown for centuries, and flowed this way and that, adown his breast and over to the stone on either side; and the whole of him is covered with a greenish ice, ancient beyond the memory of man. "This is Prometheus," I whisper to myself, "and I am alone on Caucasus."

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